

Well, our last time together, we found Paul in the synagogue in the city of Thessalonica, and we're about to see what happened. But before we do that, I just want to say to you, anything you hear during this time or in the coming messages, remember that this is to build for you a clear scenario so you can appreciate what really provoked the writing of Thessalonians.

Well, let's go into the synagogue. And you have the ritual. It's a boring thing, by the way. It's given in a language no one understands. And then it's repeated in Greek, which many people don't understand. The audience: I think it's important that we understand who's in the audience. You've got the devout Jews. Then there are some other people there who, and maybe even some undevout Jews if they're like Baptists, you've got some people that are called God-fearers.

Now, we don't fully understand what that word means, but according to all that we know today, these are people who are interested in the Jewish religion, but have never become genuine proselytes, have never been immersed in water, had a lot of questions asked them, and then dunked, thereby symbolizing that they're going into the Hebrew faith. I want to tell you who three of those people are because we know three names. One of them is named Jason. And all I can tell you about Jason is that he owns a home in Thessalonica. And then there's a gentleman named Secundus. The only thing I can tell you about him is that he's a middle child or a second child. And then there's Aristarchus, who will be with us throughout all the rest of the story of the first century church. An incredible young man. Keep your eye on him. I think one of the few things that we can know about the first century not found in the scripture is a very strong tradition that Aristarchus was killed in, I think, the year 62 A.D., during the persecution of Nero in Rome. In fact, this young man only has about 15 or 20 years to live before he dies for the faith. But right now, he's not even a believer.

Nobody knows what's going on. Paul has just been asked to speak. He begins speaking. He has taken on his garb as a Pharisee. And he does a brilliant job of disclosing to the people that someone has come, even the Messiah in Jerusalem, in Israel, and has been received. They are astounded. They are excited. They didn't know this. News out of Jerusalem is slow. So, he points to Silas and says, I didn't see this firsthand, but Silas did. Silas stands up and says, Yes, I saw the Messiah. I knew him personally.

And then Paul goes on. Everybody is really thrilled at what they're hearing. And Paul declares that he has been killed. And there is astonishment, sorrow, and terror in the hearts of everyone. The God-fearers think, 'We've got a Messiah, and now he's gone.' Then Paul explains to them that there's something that we never understood about the Messiah, and that is that he would die, and he'd die for Israel. He'd die for the sins of the Hebrew people, but he would also rise from the dead. And he was alive. He had risen from the dead.

People could not comprehend what was going on within the synagogue. Everyone's eyes were aglow. The old Hebrews who waited so long throughout their life, knowing that their forefathers had waited even for centuries for this day, were absolutely thrilled. Silas has a few more words, and the meeting ends. Everybody gathers around Paul and Silas and says to them, 'Come back next week; we want to hear more.' So, this is Saturday; Paul and Silas

decide, yes, absolutely, we will be back, and they will, and they're going to explain more about the Messiah and what happened. And Paul said he would reveal even more from the scriptures about how those prophecies became real.

Well, they leave. Paul's excited. This is the first time in his entire life, ever, that he has been invited back to a synagogue two times. He can hardly believe it. Well, there's something else now we need to understand. And that is Paul, Silas, and Timothy are still broke. They are running out of money fast. Paul and Silas are still very ill from the beating. And they cannot let the Jewish people know this is true. Because if you're sick, and you're Hebrew, it means God's punishing you. If you've been mistreated, it means God may not be loving you like you perhaps should be, because there's something in your life. They go back. Paul is still, and as they go to the end, they still don't know for sure if they should be in this town. And this problem will haunt Paul for the next few weeks. You know he's already passed up two towns larger than Thessalonica, beautiful places, where he did not preach the gospel, did not raise up the church. One was Apollonia, and the other one I can't pronounce.

Alright, this is the situation as we're returning in the second week. Now, it may be that we can't really tell, but it may be that the synagogue people were a little bit more cautious this time. Everything that happened in that last meeting was a moment of enthusiasm.

Anyway, Paul is brilliant. He opens the Scripture from one end to the other, telling about the Messiah, the death, the resurrection, and how Christ should suffer; he probably spoke a great deal out of the book of Isaiah. And once more, there are so many people whose hearts are thrilled. They go to leave, they'll receive another invitation not quite as warm, a lot of questions in the minds of the people who are listening but they have been invited back the next week and that's just sizzled and granted now Paul, Silas and Timothy return to the inn they spend the week there they are healing still Paul is struggling is this where God wants me to be. He doesn't know.

He needs some evidence. And the money is trickling out, what little they've got left. They are fasting on certain days. They're eating one meal on other days. Paul and Silas probably go down the marketplace looking around and see if there's some way they could make a living for the next few days. We'll have time to get into the economics of Thessalonica and that generation, but they do have a problem in trying to move into a town as perfect strangers and make a living.

But I think I should tell you what the marketplace looks like. It's about 200 yards long. It's one-sided. And as you walk up the marketplace from one end to the other, there is everything on earth for sale, and everybody has a little booth that's about six by eight or eight by ten. Here you can buy some rattan. There you buy wine. There is a place where you would buy jars and vases. The next one is filled with a certain grain. The next one, the sower might be selling mixed grain. The next one would have fruit. The next one would have dry fruit. The next one might be a carpenter working at his trade. The next one might very well be a man who can read and write. He sits there all day waiting for people who cannot read and write to help them with their documents.

Go to the next one again. It might be some tradesman of some sort working there. The next one might be someone who makes or sells copper or brass, or bronze. You can go down that little yard stretch and come across almost anything that you people that day needed. And Paul is looking around because he is a tentmaker, and he's thinking to himself, 'Can I make a living in this town? Can I make any small change?' There's no moonlighting in this economy at this particular time.

Now, the third week dawns. And probably they know by now this is the last meeting they're going to have in the synagogue. So let's look at it. There are more people here now than there have ever been. In fact, the synagogue is packed. Rumors have gone out all over the town. Very little ever happens anyway, so any rumor can get a lot of people attracted. The place is packed. They go through the ritual. Once more, Paul is invited to speak, but this time the synagogue manager says, 'It may be that we have made an error in having you speak, so we're going to ask you some questions.' And they begin asking him questions, and they're very cutting questions. And Paul is brilliant. Finally, one of the men turns to the audience and says, 'We have discovered that these men caused a great deal of trouble and problems in the city of Philippi, and in fact, it may be that there is no synagogue there at all today because of them. They could be ruffians. We think they're gangsters. We don't think you should be listening to these people.'

Paul continues to stand. He refutes what they have to say. The man has never been more brilliant than in this moment. Finally, the synagogue leader says, 'We don't want you anymore. Get out of this building. Don't any of you people listen to this man. He is a liar and he is dishonest in every way. He does not tell the truth.'

Well, Paul walks out. Silas walks out. Timothy walks out. And this is a moment of discouragement. That back hasn't completely healed. He's gone through a lot of years of rejection. What Paul has failed to realize is that there's a God. What Paul doesn't know is what has happened in the lives of some of those people who have heard. Jason and his wife, for instance, and I have to stop here and tell you, anything I tell you for the next few minutes, don't expect to find it in the scripture, but it's important that you understand the atmosphere. Jason and his wife unwittingly have already received Christ as their Lord. They were Greeks, they were not Jews, and they knew that this Messiah must be theirs, and something happened within their being when they believed.

Aristarchus comes out. He's as excited as he can be. And he says, Will you be back next week? Paul says, I can't be back next week. And he says, "Well, let's go somewhere else and talk. Can we go home with you?" We live in an inn, there's no place to talk. Isn't there something we can do? Other people have now gathered around. We want to hear some more. Well, I don't know what to do about that. I don't know what to say. Don't you people understand that I have just been accused of being a liar and a gangster? 'Nah, that doesn't matter, we believe you. We like what you said, not what they said.' A little Jewish lady comes up, an elderly lady, and looks up into their faces and says, I have been waiting for the Messiah all my life, and what you have said is true, and I believe. Tell me more about my Lord.

Then Jason says to Paul, "I will open my home to you. We can speak in my home. Meet there." Paul hears a murmur, and then he says, Alright, when shall we do this? Jason said, I don't know. Any night this week is fine with me. It'll have to be in the evenings. And Aristarchus says, "Why wait? Why wait? Let's do it tonight." And Jason said, 'Alright, fine.' And everybody around says, "Where do you live, Jason? And he says, Well, I live up that hill. And then they say, Forget it. We'll follow you home right now. And then Jason stands up on a pillar, there on the side of the street, and he hollers out to everybody some directions, and he says, 'I'll have a torch lit at my home, and you can tell which house is mine by the torch in front of it.' Everybody is excited.

Paul cannot believe this. He has never witnessed this; he is trying to stay reserved. Silas is very excited. And then Jason says, "Come with us now, have dinner with us." And they look at one another. They know they're hungry, and they say, "Yes, we'll come have dinner with you." So that afternoon, at the home of Jason and his wife, in a house that is destined to make history in that town, Paul, Silas, and Timothy have dinner.

Paul's still not sure, he's still not sure; he goes up on the roof to take a short sleep, get some rest, and as he wakes up, he hears a Hebrew tune. And he realizes that someone downstairs is teaching somebody a Hebrew chant, a Hebrew song from one of the Psalms. And he listens to that. He also hears some people outside, and they've just come in the door, and he's getting curious. So he calls down to Silas. Silas comes up to the roof, and he says, 'Where's Timothy?' And he said, "You hear that singing down there?" Yes. He said, "Well, that's Timothy." Paul said, Timothy? Well, he's a Gentile. How does he know these Hebrew songs? Don't forget that his mother, of course, was a Hebrew.

So Paul listens. And he says, How many people are down there? And Silas says, I don't know. I haven't looked yet. So, Paul picks up a scroll out of his satchel, puts it under his arm, and, very trepidatiously, goes down and peeks into the living room. And what greets his eyes absolutely astounds him. The room is comfortably filled with 30, 40, maybe 50 people, and they are all having a great time, just a wonderful time, learning something they've never heard of, Psalms you can sing to, probably brought in from the Jerusalem church in Judea. Paul comes in, sits down, leans his head back against the wall, and realizes this is unbelievable.

So after about an hour of everybody chattering and talking and singing, and remember, these people have never been to a Baptist church, and they don't know they're supposed to be formal, and they're just having a wonderful time. And those of you who are Baptist, please forgive me for picking on you, but I have a license to pick on Baptist. I don't have one for Methodists and Catholics, but I'm actually licensed to pick on Baptists.

Paul stands to speak. And there is something that happens to this man while he's speaking. He has a revival in his spirit. The Paul of Damascus, the Paul of Antioch, the Paul of Galatia, begins to come back into being. And while he speaks, his spirit is released. And he brings a powerful, powerful message on the Lordship and the centrality of Jesus Christ. When he finishes, there are lots of questions; he gives answers, the meeting goes on late into the

night, and then they ask the question, "When can we meet again?" and once more, Paul is absolutely astounded. "You want to meet again?" "Well, of course, we want to meet again," and so Paul says, 'Alright, we'll meet two nights from now,' and somebody says, "No, let's meet tomorrow night. Paul says, "No, two nights from now." And they all discuss the situation. They're going to come back two nights from now, and so two nights from then, Paul of Tarsus once more speaks to these people.

But I want to remind you, this brother is not at all sure, not one bit, and this is his prayer, because he doesn't know if he's wasting his time or if he's doing what he should be doing; nonetheless, he decides, alright, let's get serious. The next time they meet, Paul of Tarsus uncorks a message on the kingdom of God. Aristarchus sits there and says, This man is going to be thrown in jail for this message. And then he thinks to himself, he's already been thrown in jail for this message. Paul preaches a message that would leave you to think that he is saying give up your allegiance to the Roman Empire, give up your allegiance to everything on this earth, and give your allegiance to a kingdom, to a nation, to a civilization, that cannot be seen, but nonetheless is a civilization on this earth, and has a King, and you give your allegiance to Him and to Him alone. And the people incredibly receive his message very enthusiastically.

Well, they go back to the inn where they're staying. Their money is now virtually gone. That money has lasted a long time, hasn't it? Silas says to Paul, Are you maybe pressing this just a little too much? That was pretty heavy what you said to these people. Don't you want to kind of come into these things a little slower than that? And Paul says, "No, I've got to know if these people really mean business. I don't know if I belong here. I don't know if this is where God wants me." So, the next meeting, Paul of Tarsus says to the brothers and sisters, "There is a Christian thing we do if you really are going to give up the world and the kingdoms of this earth, and you're going to follow Jesus Christ, and you're going to believe on him with all your heart, then believe on him. But don't come back to any more meetings. There's no business for you to be here just to hear me speak; make up your mind. He brought a message then, a very clear message on following Christ and then on being baptized, something they did not even understand.

And then Paul did a very brave thing. He said, 'Is there anybody in this room who knows what I'm talking about and is willing to be baptized?' And Jason immediately says, "I am." And then Paul says, "Good. The meeting is now in your hands. Silas, Timothy, and I are walking out of here. You folks need to make up your mind about what you're going to do. Because if you're going to go further on with the Lord, you're going to have to believe him, confess him, and you're going to have to be baptized." Well, this is an astonishing thing. Paul walks out of the house; so does Silas, who doesn't know what's going on, and so does Timothy, and they leave.

Paul goes out. He's...Paul is fighting. He has hope, but he doesn't know. And he is pressing hard. By the way, folks, please remember that when you open I Thessalonians, a great deal of what I'm telling you now in story form, you will find there. By the time we get through the

introduction, you ought to be able to read Thessalonians and know everything, understand everything in it, just from the introduction.

All right, Paul leaves. Well, about an hour later, they come down the street where the torch is lit, and it's obvious that no one's there anymore. Obviously, everyone has left. And Paul says, let's see if Jason is still home, let's see what happened. And Jason's wife meets him at the door and says, "Oh, Paul, it's the most wonderful meeting you've heard in your life. You can't imagine what happened." And Paul's still, you know, he doesn't know what to think about this. And the story unfolds that Jason and his wife make a declaration for Christ to leave whatever it is that they have done.

And Jason explains that he and his wife had been seekers for a long, long time. Someone else speaks and says, 'I'm about to lose one of my children to the Hindu religion. Another one tells why he's been going to the synagogue, even though he's Greek, and what's really been going on within him and the restlessness that is there. And then Aristarchus says, I want to be baptized. I want to become one of these people like they are down there in Jerusalem and Judea.

And someone else and someone else. And by the time the smoke clears, about 40 of the people have said they will dare join in this new thing that's just hit town; they don't know exactly what it is. And about 10 others of them say, "Well, we're not sure, but we want to go home, talk to our family. We want to have a little time." Well, Paul of Tarsus has already announced to those people that if there's anyone who's prepared to be baptized on a certain day at a certain time, they're going to be baptized, so let's imagine that there happens to be a nice heathen holiday that week, and everybody - during that particular era of the first century there was no seven day week, there were just a lot of heathen holidays throughout the year - let's imagine one of them showed up this week. Everybody has the opportunity to go worship Zeus or Jupiter or whatever. But the Christians all show up at a nearby river. And here they come, and there are about 40 people who are baptized.

Now, I'm not going to describe the baptism to you because if you're Catholic, they got sprinkled. If you are a dinker or a dunker, then they all got baptized face forward. If you're a Baptist, they all got baptized in the water back that way. If you're a Methodist, they all got something doused on their heads. So, we're just going to say they got baptized, about 40 of them. And they sang in praise of the Lord. And Paul brought a message on the Holy Spirit to those people and told them what baptism meant experientially to them. Now again, you find a lot of this in Thessalonians.

Now, you would think our brother would be content with that, would you not? That absolutely, that would be evidence enough for him that the Lord has done something in this town. But Paul of Tarsus is still restless. And so, he sits down, and he spends a lot of time considering this, and he comes back to the next meeting, and he says to the saints, to these believers, he says, 'Now there's something you have to do; you have to do away with your idols.' And they can hardly understand or comprehend what he means. And one of them says, Paul, do you not understand that these idols of ours have been passed down from

generation to generation? They're part of our inheritance. And they're our wealth. Many of them are made of gold. Some of them are silver. Some of them are encrusted with jewels. You don't get rid of your idols.

Paul tells the story about the man who beat his idol to death. And so there are a lot of questions. They're not really clear about this. They can't comprehend having a home without idols. They are not sure at all. Every person in that room listens. Oh, it is a somber, sober meeting. This is a grave situation, and they realize it. They discuss with one another. "You mean we are going to go home and kill our gods?" And so on into the evening they talk about this, they have some prayer, and in the next session when they get together (if someone were to come into your church and tell you, the fellowship, yes it's not quite a church yet if you are having an automobile, you're never going to have an idea of how these people felt. "They've told us that whatever God is in your home, they had gods in their homes; everyone did. And there was the cultural, emotional attachment to those gods that is very difficult for us to comprehend today.) And here are an entire people faced with giving up their gods. It's almost an incomprehensible thing they are facing. There's a lot of prayer; there's a lot of crying.

Once again, Paul is pressing to his limits. He's still not sure, so they have another meeting a week later, and they're going to come back and share what they did by the next morning, though, it's all over the community because they have returned to their homes, they've talked to their kinfolks, they've given the idols to their other kin, some of them have broken them, some of them have melted them down, whatever they did with them, it's all over the community. Now, can you imagine a word like this coming out all over town? They killed their gods? A whole group of people killed their gods? They got rid of their gods? Does that mean that they don't believe in gods anymore? And someone else said, Does this mean they're still Roman citizens? A lot of questions came out of this, but the interesting thing about it is that there were rumors all over town, which have now, for the first time, really put these people into the spotlight of the town. They are now *the rumor* in this city. Everything that's being discussed in the marketplace and in homes centers around this strange group of people who are in Jason's house. Everyone knows who Jason is now. Everyone knows where his house is. And they know something strange is happening. The rumors are twisted. They're crazy, but they're real, and it is going to, in the near future, begin to affect their lives.

Well, the meeting in which everyone shares what they have done, and they do share, and the meeting is still informal. I mean by that it is totally informal. You cannot know what's going to take place in one of their meetings. They weep. They share. They cry. They rejoice. There is a knitting taking place among this people who are in the town of Thessalonica, but there's another crisis going on, and it has got to be resolved, and it's a crisis of the heart on the part of Paul of Tarsus.

If you don't mind, I'm going to get just really intimate here. It's going to be hard for you to comprehend what's happening to Paul right now. Let's say that they know that tomorrow will be the last time they will be able to spend in the inn. The money is gone. They are

hungry. Paul's still discouraged. With all that's happened, that lack of assurance is still in his life. But that's not the problem. The problem is that he could tell these people his needs financially, and they would begin giving him money. And he would join virtually every minister in the world at that point, would he not? I'm not going to say he would then be salaried. I would simply say he would be financially dependent on those people. Whether or not at this point they could support him at all, I do not know, and you don't know, and we're never going to know, and as I said to you in an earlier message we don't know where Paul and Barnabas got their money on the first trip; all I can tell you right now is these men don't have a penny left on this earth, which puts them in an awkward position. They can't even leave town; they don't have anything to leave town on. They can't stay, or if they do, they're going to have to begin receiving money from this church, this fellowship of believers. Paul's never done that, and he is having the fight of his life.

He doesn't know whether to make his needs known. These people have never even thought about helping them financially. And I'm not afraid to say, I know, I don't want money involved. Silas is the same way. He wants to stay, and yet there's no money. Now, Timothy's particularly scared because he's never been totally without food and a place to sleep. And right now, yeah, he's spending his time examining cobblestones and looking out as to where he might be able to find something to do, and sleeping out under the stars. Now, there's only one ingredient missing in this story, and that is God.

So, come with me, and let's go to another city. I'd like to introduce a name here I didn't the last time. I wish I could tell you where this man came from. I wish I could tell you what he's doing in the town of Philippi. We're going to go back to Philippi; all I can tell you is the name is Luke. He may have been from Philippi, he may have been from Troas, he may have been from Antioch, Paul's home church. All I know is he seems to have emerged out of nowhere. He seems to have been a believer for quite some time. He's the one Paul left in Philippi, where he'd only spent three weeks.

Well, we're in the home of Lydia, and Lydia is talking to Luke, and Lydia is saying, When they left here, I gave them the clothes they were wearing. There was very little money in it; surely by now they've run out, and Luke says perhaps Paul is making tents there; she says perhaps, but even if he opened the place, it's going to take weeks for, weeks for him to be able to get a business, and they don't make much money, you know, Luke. She says, 'I would like for us as a fellowship of believers, for the ecclesia, church, to send them a gift.' So, they have a meeting in Philippi - this is not Thessalonica - and they decide that they really do want to send a gift.

Now, there's the girl who used to have a clairvoyant spirit. She wants to give some. The jailer. Do you remember the jailer? And then there was a soldier who was converted there, and then, some of the farming people out from the community there, and then, of course, perhaps the person who could give most liberally was Lydia. So, they put together an offering over a period of weeks, and then they send it by way of a ship's captain. Ships can go from one of these cities to the other. They give the address of where they are sure Paul either will be or where he can pick up his mail. They know where he's staying. They send



this gift by way of the captain or the purser of the ship, as was the custom, probably, and they know that they're going to hear some news back in a few weeks. What they don't know is how crucial this situation is.

So, let's return now to Thessalonica. But before we do, I just want to tell you something. A wonderful bond is about to grow up between Paul and the church in Philippi that will remain with them, between the two, forever. Twenty years from now, you will still be hearing Paul speak of this day when he received this gift. That church will care for him in a way that no other fellowship of believers on this earth cared for him. They seemed to be the one and only group who really, truly knew who this man was, and they cared for him throughout all his lifetime and all his ministry.

Well, let's go back. Paul has received an invitation to come and live in the home of Jason. He has turned it down again and again. He's never done anything like that, to stay permanently in a home. Silas cannot understand this man, Paul. Timothy does not know what's going on.

I know what's going on. And because I'm a minister too, I know what that brother is fighting. And he is one of the few people, it seems, in all of church history who ever fought with this problem. The rest of us just gave in. Paul does not wish to receive money for preaching the gospel in the town where he's preaching. It's just that simple. And you've got every reason in the world not to want to, because with it comes a lot of limitations, and ultimately, either evils...money is a very powerful thing. Even a little money is a very powerful thing. Even when it comes as a gift, such as Jason's house. He will not tell the church in Thessalonica his situation, and this is a major crisis.

But sometimes, when you have nothing else to do, thank God that Paul of Tarsus reached down into the depths of his innards and refused to receive money for the preaching of the gospel. His breed has disappeared from the face of this planet. Oh, I'm a man who preached the gospel. I'm not talking about men who preach the gospel. I'm talking about men who give all their lives to the planting, to the raising of churches, and do it free of charge, and all the abuse that comes with it and goes with it.

Well, anyway, we come back to the place where they've been staying, the inn. And Paul goes up to the innkeeper and says to him, Sir, we won't be spending the night with you tonight. Now, Timothy looks like he's staring in the face of death; he doesn't know what he's going to do when he walks out the door. Silas is utterly beside himself. Being a good Jew, he knows Paul is supposed to receive money for the gospel. Paul is dug in. There is no money, no place to live, and Paul will not stay at Jason's home. And the innkeeper says, It's been pleasant to have you. By the way, something came to you from the ship to Persia today. And he hands Paul something. Paul takes it without much thought, looks at it, realizes it came from Philippi, and can't tell what it is. Timothy is the first to sense what's going on. And he stands there like a pillar of salt. He can't move, and he can't think.

And then Paul realizes what that might be. And so does Silas. He breaks the wax. He unrolls the package. He reaches down through the sheepskin, pulls back the papyri, and he pours

something out in his hand. It's gold and silver and some other coins. And he just stands there and stares at it. He cannot believe. The only other church in all of Greece has given them the key to survival.

Paul looks at Silas, and as is Paul's custom, he begins crying. Silas starts praising the Lord, and Timothy starts running around the room in circles. He doesn't know how to express what he's feeling inside. Paul holds the money in his hand for a moment and then you can see something breaking loose in him, and through his sobs he says, 'Timothy, you go tell Jason that we will stay in his home, but we will pay for our lodging there just as though we were at an inn, and we will pay for every meal, and if you will not accept that at this price, then we will stay in this inn where we are.' And he said, "Go tell him." And Timothy is already halfway out the door, and Paul hollers, Wait, come back here. And he hands one of the coins to Timothy and says, Go get yourself something to eat, young man.

And so Timothy takes off, and he's hollering, and he's jumping up and down, and this thing has finally broken loose. Paul and Silas give a prayer of thanksgiving, and then Paul looks at Silas, lays his hand on his shoulder, and Silas can feel the grip in Paul's hand, and he can see the fire in his eyes, and he says to Silas, Silas, you and I are going into the tentmaking business. And so he walks right out of that building and down the street, where he knows he may spend weeks before he gets into any of the trade. He goes down the street looking for a place where he can open a little shop, just about that wide, where he can be a tentmaker, and he can train Silas to learn the trade. This is an exciting moment for these two men; they finally find a place, there along the way, there in the market, full of trash, broken pottery, junk, and other things. And they say to the man in the booth next to the junk, Is this claimed by anyone? Is it okay if we open a shop here? And the old toothy gentleman says, "Sure, you're welcome."

So, they begin cleaning out the mess. And they hang up a curtain under the air, and he says, I've got to find something to repair and hang here so people can tell what I do. And then Silas says, How are you going to get into business? And Paul responds, I don't have any idea. How long is it going to take? I don't have the slightest notion how long it's going to take before we get business, but we start right now.

And this is what Paul does. And I wish you'd love him for it. I want you to see this little fellow, and another door opens to the life of this man we've never seen before. Paul of Tarsus, who has been a tentmaker his whole life and has held on to this business of not charging a church for bringing it into existence, starts down that street of the marketplace, and suddenly, he truly is an oriental, and he is. He's an Easterner. And he's plying his trade. And he's doing what anyone else does. He's going to hawk his wares.

And so he starts down the street. And he begins crying out in this almost monotone, staccato voice. Tentmaker! Sicilian tentmaker! I make good tents. I repair tents. I repair horses' harnesses. I repair all leather goods. Cilician tentmaker, I can repair your goods. I am from Cilicia. I'm from Tarsus, where we make tents. We're the best of the tentmakers. Come and have your tents repaired and made. Good, black, goat hair. I use the best material.

Silas can't believe it. Here's a man who's sat under Gamaliel. Here's a man who's known all over Judea and hated everywhere he's ever been. He has just become a common laborer so that he can preach the gospel without charge, without offense, and without accusation.

And throughout all the messages that I have brought up until this very instant, I have tried not to insert my own personal life here, but I have something to say. Paul of Tarsus made the statement, 'I boast in the fact that I did not ever charge anyone for the gospel, but I paid my way. And when I went to people's homes, I actually would not go there unless they let me pay for my meal.'

About 25 years ago, I was first a pastor and then I became an evangelist, and the Lord was good to me. I became well known very quickly, all over America. I held citywide crusades. One day, I decided it was more important that I'd be a Christian than I'd be a Christian leader, and I pulled away from what is called the professional ministry. I also, even then, was an author, and I was well known; actually, I wasn't famous, I mean world famous, I wasn't here, I was down here somewhere, but wasn't way, way, way down here, an anonymous person either. And I had spent a large part of the last year studying the life of this man. I'm now telling you now, I became a schoolteacher; that is something to boast in, but I never gave up the gospel, and I raised up churches, and I went on speaking engagements and my name was known in bookstores and in journals and books across this country, and I think I was probably the only well-known minister in America, well known, and with all due respect to the rural pastor who is also a farmer, I'm talking about a nationally known Christian figure who did not allow anyone to give him money for the preaching of the gospel.

I worked with these two hands. And I continued to do that until just a few years ago when my health broke. I cannot any longer tell you that I'm like Paul of Tarsus, because I will let people pay my expenses, especially my airplane ticket or my gasoline there and back. But I have raised the testimony in this day that it is possible to work full-time and still preach the gospel full-time and never take a red cent for it. I don't know anybody else who would make that statement, especially who does the business of raising up fellowships. And of course, as you know, the groups that I affect are Christians who meet in homes. They don't own church buildings. They don't own anything.

The reason I'm telling you this is because money is still dangerous. It's years later, and it's still dangerous. Very dangerous. And I would to God, I would to God that there were more men called the Lord who would lay down receiving income who were in the business of planting churches; I'm not talking about the fellow who's fooling around preaching every once in a while, I'm not talking about the man who stays in one place his whole life and preaches to a little group of people; I am speaking of men who are utterly possessed, totally consumed with the Lord Jesus Christ who are willing to raise the testimony that Paul of Tarsus so clearly raised in Thessalonica.

We all love the man; we all respect him, but we're like Peter: we all preach the gospel and receive finances from it. Paul of Tarsus, without a Scripture in the Old Testament, set a new

standard nobody else had ever set. He literally would take no money from anybody for anything, and he was even a little bit more than that; in fact, the man was crazy in this area. If you invited Paul of Tarsus, if we are to believe what he has written, if you were to invite Paul of Tarsus to your home, he would come, only with the understanding that he would pay for his meal. Now that is a brother fighting hard to make sure he is not corrupted by anything. Can you imagine saying, I would love to invite Paul over to our house, but we can't because it is so embarrassing to take money from him. Or could you perhaps even hear a husband and wife laughingly say, Well, we've got a problem to discuss; let's invite Paul over. Besides, we need the money. He was an incredible man.