

## **Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Lecture 17, Acts 16-17**

© 2024 Craig Keener and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 17, Acts chapters 16 and 17.

In the previous session, Paul cast out a spirit, a Python spirit, a very powerful, mantic, divining spirit from a girl who was being exploited by slaveholders.

And sometimes in many cultures and in many circles, you have people overdoing this and seeing demons everywhere. By the third century, actually, that was pervasive in Judaism where some rabbis said if you put out one hand, you put it out into a thousand demons. You put out your left hand, you put it out into 10,000 demons.

The Dead Sea Scrolls talk about how every act is controlled either by the spirit of truth or by the spirit of error. We don't see that in the New Testament to that degree. But sometimes there's a real spirit and it has to be dealt with.

And Paul did that. But he seemed reluctant to, perhaps because he could see what might happen if he did deal with it. And we see that in verse 19, because the owners of the slave girl, are upset that she's been liberated from spiritual bondage because now they don't have any profit from her fortune-telling.

So, they drag them before the magistrates. Now, if you wanted to get somebody to court, you could invite them to court. But if they didn't show up, you had to drag them to court.

They don't take a chance. They just drag Paul and Silas to court. Luke happily is not part of the we here.

Luke and Timothy probably don't get dragged in, but Paul and Silas do. And notice the charge that they're going to raise against them is not, well, what charge are you going to say? Are you going to say, oh, they liberated our slave girl from spirits? Well, there wasn't a legal charge like that. They could say legally, you damaged our property.

But they might not win that case. So, they go to the lowest common denominator and make a very base charge before these magistrates. The title magistrates that's used here, the strategoi, was the most common Greek title for the Latin duo viri.

These are the two Roman officials of Philippi. In Latin, it would be the praetor. Now, they aren't judging by themselves.

There's a whole crowd of people around them. And these officials will want to keep the crowd happy. This is done in the marketplace, it says.

I think it's the Greek word agora, but it's not a Greek commercial agora. Here, it's the nearby central agora in Philippi, which has been excavated, and functioned as a Roman forum. And so that's where they would have trials, not the commercial agora in town, but the central agora.

It was 230 feet by 485 feet or 70 meters by 150 meters. And a lot of people could have been standing there. Actually, it was intersected by the via Ignatia that ran through Philippi.

So, the charge that's brought before them is, oh, these men being Jews, teach customs that are unlawful for us being Romans. Well, they don't know. And actually, Luke's audience might not know, although they probably at least have a hint since Paul's name is Paul.

The people don't know that these are both Jews and Romans. Sometimes you have situations like that today when people just assume something about someone. Somebody walks into a classroom and assumes that such and such a person is the janitor because of their ethnicity or their youth or whatever else, and it's their professor for the first day of class or something like that.

You can have embarrassing situations. I actually liked it when students thought I was a student because it made me feel young, but I'd have to shave off my gray beard now too to experience that. But in any case, there's a Jewish-Roman contrast, and it reflects common ancient anti-Judaism, very pervasive in many parts of antiquity.

And Claudius' decree that's mentioned in chapter 18 in verse 2 may actually have been recent, where he expelled the Jewish community from Rome, at least officially. Certainly, in Alexandria there had been major anti-Judaism, major anti-Semitism, and in many other places as well. Well, Philippi was a Roman colony, and if Claudius could expel Jews from Rome, they wouldn't be in the most comfortable situation in Philippi either because they could say, well, they did it in Rome.

We should do whatever the Romans do because we are a Roman colony. Romans' main complaint about Jews was that they were converting people. Well, what is Paul here to do? To convert people.

Now, from a Christian perspective, it's like people need this. This is something we have to give them. If somebody's in a building on fire, we may risk our lives to get them out of the building.

Except in this case, this isn't something we can drag them out of the fire. All we can do is offer them the opportunity, at least warn them about the fire. But in any case, it's not always viewed positively by some other people.

Sometimes it's been done in very inappropriate ways, but it's not always viewed appropriately, as appropriate by other people, even when we do it in the most gentle and generous and kind and thoughtful way possible because we care about people. There was a lot of xenophobia, and fear of strangers, and you see that in probably most parts of the world today. You have some of that, except in certain urban areas, even there sometimes.

Many native non-Romans lived in Philippi, people who weren't citizens, but they lived there. They were residents, but there were few Jews there. So Jews made an easy target.

Other immigrants from the east had settled there, and that had just increased xenophobia in general. And again, Jews made a particularly easy target. Philippi was very Romanized and very proud of the Roman heritage.

So Jewish, not Roman, was something that would really stir up the crowd. Over 80% of its inscriptions are in Latin, even though it's in Macedonia, northeast of Greece. Its citizens had Roman rights.

They followed Roman law. They were exempt from tribute to Rome. Their local constitution followed the constitution of Rome.

So, they were very into their Roman-ness. In verse 22, they are stripped and beaten. Well, non-citizens could be beaten before trial to secure evidence that beating, when it was used in official terms, was called the *coercitio*.

People who were of lower class had few legal protections. How would they be beaten? Well, it says they were beaten with rods. Paul mentions that in his letters, that sometimes he was beaten with rods.

And this is the only one that Luke mentions. Luke doesn't tell you nearly all that happened to Paul, that he suffered for the gospel. But the rods would be the rods of the lictors.

The lictors were the Roman magistrates' attendants. They carried rods in bundles, and these rods could be used for circumstances like this. Stripping was standard before public beatings or other kinds of public discipline.

And public stripping and public beatings were both meant to be humiliating. It would be particularly humiliating for Judeans and peoples from Western Asia, who were

very sensitive about being seen naked, the Middle East, and so on, very sensitive about being seen naked. It's considered humiliating.

That's why in 1 Thessalonians 2 when Paul talks about what he endured in Philippi, he describes it as humiliating. So, in verses 23 to 34, we're going to read about prison ministry. In verse 23, the prison director is instructed to keep them very secure.

Well, he does keep them very secure. Puts them in the inner prison, which had no light. He's going to secure them with stocks.

I mean, there's no way they're going to escape from the inner prison anyway, but stocks are going to make it really hard. Prison director, some commentators have said that he was a veteran because Philippi was a Roman colony. But Philippi had been a Roman colony for many generations.

The veterans had been settled there in the beginning. So, he could be a descendant of veterans, but he's not likely a veteran himself. He's just the prison director.

But in any case, these places where people were imprisoned were not meant to be places of rehabilitation in antiquity. They were known for their filth, and their lack of toilet facilities. You would go where you were if you were in the stocks, you'd have to sit in it probably too unless somebody came and cleaned it up for you.

That kind of filth, you've been beaten, you're going to have wounds. Your wounds can become infected with the filth that surrounds you. The floors would be cold.

If you're fastened on the floor, all the worse. That's verse 23. Verse 24, the wood stocks would be fastened to the floor.

A stock was something they would put you in and you couldn't move, except they could move the leg stocks in different ways that would be able to move your legs apart in ways that could torture you even more if they wanted to do that. There were extra holes in the stocks so the legs could be forced into painful positions if they wanted to do that to you. It was used for low-status people and definitely people who were not Roman citizens.

In 1625, the ability to glorify God amid suffering and shame was praised by Jewish people. Greco-Roman philosophers also praised the wisdom of being content and thankful in one situation, recognizing that usually for the philosophers it was, well, we can't control it anyway. One thing we can control is our attitude.

Well, that was a profitable way of thinking, but in Judaism, it was more like we recognize God is sovereign and God is benevolent, so we're going to praise him for our situation. And that's what they do. And they're doing it at midnight.

Now, if you know of the stories of Adoniram Judson when he and some other people were imprisoned, there was somebody who was insane and he was singing during the night. And they weren't very happy about it because it was hard enough for them to get sleep. But it doesn't tell us the response of the prisoners here, but the response may have been better than we might suppose because the other prisoners don't escape and Paul is able to speak for all of them a few verses later, which suggests to us that perhaps it's that they were listening to Paul.

Perhaps some of them were converted or certainly influenced by Paul's ministry there. But in any case, singing at midnight, usually, that was the middle of one's sleep. That was not the usual time for prayer in Judaism.

But it is interesting that Psalm 119 verses 61 and 62 talk about being persecuted and praising God at midnight. And they are fulfilling that. They are doing that.

Well, in verse 26, just like back in chapter four, the place was shaken where they were assembled after they prayed. Well, in verse 26, this place is shaken. It's no guarantee that just because you pray, you're going to have an earthquake.

Prayerfully not. But in any case, there was a Jewish story. Abraham was delivered by an earthquake in Pseudo-Philo's biblical antiquities, 617.

So, there were Jewish stories about things like that. More widely though, most people in antiquity recognized earthquakes as divine activity, often as judgments. Greeks often attributed it to Poseidon, whom they called the earth-shaker, as well as the god of the sea.

Besides that, Philippi was an earthquake-prone area. I mean, you have earthquakes in that area, but normally you don't have earthquakes that don't bring the building down, but just happen to lose your bonds. I mean, it could happen, but is that just a coincidence that it happens that way? Is it just a coincidence that the sea would part just when the Israelites get there? Things like that are probably not a coincidence, even though Exodus 14 says, God used a strong east wind to blow the sea back by night, where you can say, well, the wind did it.

How often does the wind do that? In any case, this is clearly a divine activity. It's God's activity. Nobody gets hurt, but all their bonds are broken.

And we do know of prison escapes caused by earthquakes. I don't know that nobody got hurt during them. In fact, people I think did get hurt, but there were prison escapes during earthquakes in Turkey in 2011, Haiti in 2013, and Indonesia in 2013.

So, these kinds of things do happen, but this was specifically divine activity, in this case in Acts 16, and was specifically designed so nobody gets hurt. A number of other people, earlier in Acts, you have Peter and other apostles freed in Acts chapter five. Peter is freed again by the angel of the Lord in Acts chapter 12.

Well, now Paul is freed too, but there's a difference. Peter was freed and the guards were executed. Paul gets freed, but he chooses not to leave.

Of course, his situation was not as deadly as Peter's. Peter was told to leave and he did, but in this case, it's going to work out even better. With a thwarted suicide in chapter 16, verse 27, the execution was the penalty for letting prisoners escape, especially in capital cases.

Now this may, well, this wasn't a capital case, but he had been told to guard them securely. And as far as he was concerned, all the prisoners may have escaped. He is awakened, not necessarily because he was asleep on duty.

He may have been in bed. He was probably the chief jailer. He's got servants working for him, probably civic servants.

So, word is reported to him. He asks for a light to go in, and he doesn't actually go into the inner part of the prison, but he goes into the outside of it. He sees all the doors have been broken, and he realizes the prisoners could have escaped, and apparently would have escaped.

And that's the idea that he gets from the guards, who probably were asleep, as often happened. But in any case, Romans considered suicide a noble alternative to execution. In fact, Tacitus says that Messalina, who was supposed to be executed was a coward.

She was unwilling to fall on her sword, so they had to help her do it. But in any case, it was normally considered a noble alternative. Josephus, who's writing for a diaspora audience, sometimes depicts it as honorable as well.

But it was a noble alternative to some things, not to other things. If it was just certain things, that was considered ignoble. It was considered cowardly.

Well, Christian theology, following much of Jewish theology, not Josephus, but much of Jewish theology, has historically rejected suicide. And Christian theology has done so very strongly, saying only God has the right to take life. Everyone would have rejected that as the solution to depression or anything from which one could recover.

So, I'm just saying that not to say you can't understand why some people are driven to this under certain circumstances, but to say that sometimes it's a premature escape, because God still has a plan for your life. I, myself, and some people I know have been through serious anguish and are happy that we lived through it and lived to see that God had a better plan for our lives, a better purpose for our lives. So that's an excursus that's going off on a different subject.

But in any case, this man was ready to fall on a sword and Paul exhorts him not to. Wait, don't do that. We're all here and he can speak for everybody and nobody complains and says, no, we decided to, we want to escape.

Paul made his stay or something like that. So, verse 30, he runs in, falls down before them, and says, sirs, well, kurios means Lord in the vocative when you're addressing somebody directly, kuria. It can mean sir, or it can mean Lord.

You don't know. But remember, they're preaching the true Lord. And so, Paul corrects him in verse 31.

No, believe in the Lord Jesus and you'll be saved, the true Lord, the true kurios. So, he says, sirs, what must I do to be saved? We mentioned this briefly before when we talked about how that question comes up in different ways, in different parts of Luke Acts, with the rich ruler in Luke 18, with the crowds at Pentecost in Acts chapter two. Paul, not asking, formulating quite that way as a question, but in Acts chapter nine, he's told what he must do.

So, he says, how can I be saved? And the way he can be saved is through depending on Jesus, the Lord. The jailer had heard of the slave's proclamation. They're proclaiming to us the way of salvation.

So now he wants to know how to be saved. Well, they can be saved. He can be saved.

All of us can be saved if we trust in Jesus. You can be saved and your household, if they believe in Jesus, they can also be saved. So, in verse 31 and 32, Romans expected the whole household to follow the religion of the head of the household.

In that culture, that was the husband. They also expected the head to lead his household to the worship of Roman gods. That would be an important thing in Philippi, a Roman colony.

But instead, this man is going to invite them home. Verses 33 and 34, he washed them and then they washed him with the waters of baptism, as John Chrysostom pointed out long ago in a very homiletical way, but I think it's here in the text. He washes their wounds and they wash him with the water of baptism.

Now, where would they have done that? Well, that's a good question. There were places they could go, public fountains, and a lot of places you could get water in Philippi, but he would be taking them probably outside the prison itself, as well as probably outside his home. He may have had a fountain in his courtyard, but if he had a typical Roman home, if it was well-to-do, he may have had an impluvium, which I think I neglected to mention in my commentary, but I always learn new things.

It just occurred to me. An impluvium and then a pool of water there in his atrium, which was part of the design of Roman homes. But if he took them outside his home, if anybody saw him, he could be in trouble.

There were night watchmen, but in any case, most people were asleep by then, probably despite the earthquake, it was really localized. But anyway, in view of 16:20 and 21, the jailer risks getting in a lot of trouble here, and especially after he'd been told to guard them securely. In Josephus, we read about a time when Herod Agrippa I was actually in trouble for supporting Gaius Caligula, saying he wished he were king instead of Tiberius because he thought Tiberius was dead, but Tiberius wasn't dead yet, and so he was put in prison.

And the jailer was not being real nice to them, the centurion who was in charge. But then the centurion got word that Tiberius had died, and Gaius Caligula was going to be the next emperor. Ah, well then, he said, ah, this guy's going to be in good with the next emperor.

So, he's really nice to Agrippa, and he has a meal with him, even though he's the jailer and the centurion, he's nice to Agrippa. And then word comes, no, actually, the rumor was wrong, Tiberius isn't dead. Well, he immediately dissociates himself from Agrippa pulls himself away, and just hopes nobody knows that he talked to Agrippa or anything.

And then word comes back, oh yeah, Tiberius was dead after all. So, he lost all the favor he would have gained. It was very dangerous to be eating with a prisoner.

That was a total breach of protocol, and he could be in serious trouble for it. So, when we say, well, you know, other people were told to repent, and all he's told is to believe in the Lord Jesus. Well, keep in mind that believing in the Lord Jesus has certain implications.

If you really believe in Jesus, it's not just like, oh yeah, I believe in that the same way I believe that Alexander the Great lived, or that Mao lived, or that some other famous person lived, Stalin lived, or Churchill or Roosevelt lived. In any case, that's not the



kind of belief it's talking about here. We depend on him for salvation, and what he saves us from is our sins.

He gives us a new life. Now, we don't earn that. It's God's gift, but when we invite God's gift, we're inviting him to transform us.

We may, well, we're not necessarily instantly, we don't instantly become all that we will be, but we've invited God to be working in our lives. He, and we recognize who our Lord is going to be. We've changed sides from being against God to being on God's side, to recognizing he's the Lord of our life.

So, in any case, this man, he's willing to do whatever. Remember what it said in Luke chapter 10, if they receive you, they receive me. Welcoming, and giving hospitality to the agents of the gospel.

Let them feed you. Let them give you a place to stay. Well, he welcomes them into his own home.

He feeds them. He's receiving them as agents of the true Lord, even though that can be very costly for him. But it's at night and they're not trying to get him in trouble.

So, they're going to go back to the prison afterward. But also, it's something serious that they do too, because he feeds them, but he can't go out and get kosher food. I mean, he's not Jewish to begin with.

So, for them to have table fellowship with him is crossing another barrier. This table fellowship shows again, their welcome of these Gentiles, even in a way that may be costly to them in terms of their cultural tastes and so on. Well, not that he's going to serve them pork.

I mean, he wouldn't go that far, but it's not going to be kosher-prepared food. So, in verses 35 and 36, why do the authorities come to them the next morning and say, you can go now? Well, maybe the earthquake was a sign to them. If it happened anywhere else, sometimes people took that seriously.

That might be an omen. And maybe it has something to do with one of our decisions yesterday. Possibly.

Although earthquakes have happened on other occasions, and they may or may not have gotten a report about what happened to the jail. But they may have gotten it. The jailer may have thought it was a good idea to let them know.

But also, it's possible that it was due to the intercession behind the scenes of wealthy Lydia, although she was not indigenous. She was not a Roman citizen who lived there. Probably she was from Thyatira.

She was a business agent, so that wouldn't give her as much status. But she may have had the money to persuade them. There's one thing that these politicians would do in front of a crowd, and it's another thing if people negotiate privately behind the scenes.

Or they may have just felt that the public humiliation was deemed sufficient as a warning, and they could ask him to leave after that. What the officials were unaware of, however, was that they had actually beaten Roman citizens. And while Paul and Silas may not have thought that that would have made a difference, the jailer may have informed them, no, in Philippi, we take Roman citizenship quite seriously, and that would have made a difference.

Or Paul may have just decided, well, I'll wait until afterward, let them know afterward, so I'll have them in trouble rather than them having me in trouble. In any case, some people think he just cried out and the mob was so loud they couldn't hear him. But sometimes officials just ignored it anyway.

Roman citizenship in the provinces was a mark of very high status, especially in the eastern provinces where not as many people yet had Roman citizenship. If Paul and Silas didn't have citizenship documents with them, which probably they didn't, at least when they were arrested, it would be on record for Paul in Tarsus. So, you know, people could send to check it out.

But in the meantime, you'd have to take their word for it. That was what the law required. Falsely claiming citizenship was a capital offense.

So, if you're about to be released, chances are you're not going to falsely claim citizenship and risk getting executed after they find out that you were not a citizen. Paul's family probably received citizenship as descendants of freed Roman slaves. I believe I mentioned earlier that Pompey, the Roman general in the second century, sorry, the first century B.C., had taken many Judeans as slaves to Rome.

Other Jews in Rome collected their money, they bought their freedom, and as freed slaves of Roman citizens, these Jewish people became Roman citizens themselves. So, there were a large number of Jewish Roman citizens living in Rome. Many of them also left Rome, settled elsewhere in the Roman world, or went back to Judea sooner or later, as we see in Acts chapter 6 and verse 9. Some of the Libertini settled in different places and then came to Jerusalem.

Well, Paul's family probably was descended from freed slaves. And anyway, for generations, they'd been Roman citizens. So, the Julian law forbade binding, putting in chains, certainly in stocks, or beating Roman citizens without trial.

Maybe the jailer would inform them that citizenship was taken seriously in Philippi and now they're going to call on it. Well, there are some objections that have been raised to Paul's citizenship. These are objections by those who tend to be more skeptical about Acts.

Well, they say, Paul never mentions his citizenship. Well, how strong is an argument from silence? That's not a very strong argument, since Paul attaches no intrinsic significance to Roman citizenship, even in the book of Acts. Paul avoids boasting except when compelled, and when he does boast, he boasts about his sufferings for the gospel.

He's not going to boast about his Roman citizenship. That would be antithetical to what he's trying to accomplish in 2 Corinthians. It might be presupposed in Philippians 1, verses 7 and 30, however, where he writes back to the church in Philippi, where many of the members, like the jailer, probably were Roman citizens.

He writes back to them and says, you know, you share in the outcome of my trial. Because whatever happens to Paul as a Roman citizen is going to set a precedent for other Roman citizens. He's before the emperor's court.

That's going to set a precedent, and therefore it's going to affect them in Philippi as well. So, Paul may not be entirely silent, but even if he were, it's not something we would expect him to talk about in his letters. Second, some scholars who are skeptical about the claim say, well, Luke is trying to establish Paul's high status.

Well, yes, but just because he wants to establish Paul's high status doesn't prove that he's making it up. He might seek to establish it without seeking to fabricate it. Paul's Pharisaism is also high status in a Judean context, and yet in Philippians 3, in verse 5, Paul himself declares that he was trained as a Pharisee.

Well, they also argue citizenship was reserved for the municipal elite, and therefore it was closed to Jews. This argument misreads the evidence, and it misreads the evidence very badly. We have 1173 Roman citizens in Ephesus' inscriptions.

It was not reserved for the municipal elite, and there were various ways to achieve citizenship, including being freed as a slave. Thousands of slaves in Rome each year became Roman citizens while it was difficult for officials in non-colonies in the Roman East. Some have also argued, well, Jews who are Roman citizens would have to participate in pagan practices, so Paul could not have been a Roman citizen.

Again, this is simply false. Josephus in Roman Jewish inscriptions shows that this is false. Philo shows that there's an entire community of Jewish Roman citizens in Rome.

So sometimes the people who are skeptical of Acts are using information that has simply been made up. Sometimes it simply shows that they haven't done proper research when they're being skeptical. Fifth, Paul never uses the trianomena, the three names of a Roman citizen in his letter, unlike inscriptions.

Well, only official documents required that. Inscriptions were seeking honor. Paul was not.

Greek and Roman citizens in the East gave their names in Greek ways most often. Of 50 Jewish Roman citizen inscriptions in Rome, in Rome itself, for Jewish Roman citizens, none of them use the trianomena. That's zero percent.

Further, this appeals to inscriptions, letters were not inscriptions. Pliny, is not only a Roman citizen, he belongs to the senatorial class. He's a very high-level aristocratic Roman citizen.

In his letters, he uses only one or two of his names, never three, but often one. Correspondence often used just one in their letters. It's not surprising that Paul does that.

Here is a stronger argument against Paul being a citizen. Paul reports that he was beaten with rods. Citizens were not allowed to be beaten with rods.

But Luke, who reports his citizenship, also does report such a beating. And Luke would know that citizens weren't supposed to be beaten with rods. Varys and other governors did, in fact, inflict such beatings on known citizens in places where they could get away with it.

Florus, who was a governor of Judea, inflicted this not only on Roman citizens but on equestrians. That is, on people of the Roman knight class, a rank shared by some governors when he was governor of Judea. So, this argument, while it's a good argument, it's not a good enough argument.

Well, why not reveal citizenship before the beating? That would yield a prolonged case with more bad publicity, because these people would have an opportunity to speak back and say, no, no, these are still foreign customs. Officials could require certification from Tarsus, which would require a long time. Officials might finally decide against him anyway.

But after the officials have violated the law, Paul has the upper hand. And it also may simply be that this provincial Jew didn't expect vindication until he experienced it later on in Corinth with Gallio, or until the Philippian jailer informed him that, no, Philippi takes these things more seriously than some other places. Well, what are arguments favoring Paul's Roman citizenship, aside from the fact that Luke mentions it and Luke knew him, which should be an argument in favor of it, but some other arguments as well? His name favors it.

That is not a Christian special pleading. It's argued by Fitzmeyer, who's a good Catholic scholar, but it's also argued by Garrett Ludeman, who's an atheist New Testament scholar. So, the name favors it.

Nearly always, Paulus is a cognomen in inscriptions. When it was a prenomen, a first name, usually it was a reused cognomen from the family. People usually went by their cognomen, which Paul does.

This was a respectable Roman name. It would suggest, but not prove citizenship, but it was enough that many in the East would assume Roman citizenship. Paul got his Roman name from somewhere, and it wasn't merely for decoration in Jerusalem.

The strong majority of people who used that name were, in fact, Roman citizens. Second, only a citizen could appeal to the emperor and then be sent to Rome. Well, this happened to Paul.

His letters support unacts at this point, although all of his letters were before or after the time that this happened. If we put them together, we have the clues that suggest it. Paul wanted to visit Rome.

Paul expected Judean opposition. Those are both in Romans 15. Later, from probably Philippians 1, at least according to the way Philippians is usually interpreted, Paul is in custody in Rome.

Well, how did Paul get into Roman custody? We have other evidence that Paul was in Rome. Well, he wanted to get to Rome. He expected trouble in Judea, and then he ended up in Rome.

He could have traveled on his own, but he didn't end up in Rome anyway. He ends up in Roman custody which he apparently got into somewhere else before he got to Rome. Further, Luke would hardly invent the lengthy Roman custody starting earlier in Judea than necessary because chains and Roman custody were a matter of shame in the culture.

People normally wanted to dissociate from people in chains or people in Roman custody. Luke wouldn't invent Paul's Roman custody, and Luke wouldn't invent it

earlier than necessary. Luke wouldn't spend the entire last quarter of Acts based on a fiction because the last quarter of Acts doesn't make sense unless Paul was arrested in Judea and then appealed to Rome, and that's why he's sent to Rome.

And remember, this is the most detailed part of Acts. It's part of the we narrative with an eyewitness. This is one major reason why most scholars recognize, yes, Paul probably was a Roman citizen.

Further, Luke's implicit information fits the claim. He speaks earlier about the synagogue of the freed persons, which includes freed persons from Cilicia, which would include Tarsus. And Luke wouldn't want to invent a slave background for Paul.

If he's going to invent a background for Paul, it wouldn't be as a freed person. It would be, hey, why not, if you're going to invent an honorable background, maybe he belongs to the Western class, like a few high-class Jews in the municipal aristocracy in Jerusalem. Luke wouldn't invent the slave background, and Luke doesn't even specify Paul as a member of the synagogue, even though it seems to be implied by the context.

Some supporting arguments, Paul succeeds in reaching Roman citizens in a way that most people wouldn't have done if they weren't Roman citizens. Paul also especially targets Roman colonies and ultimately wants to go to Rome itself, even before he's arrested. Paul's Roman name.

I talked about this already in Acts 3:9 when it first occurred, but it fits Saul. Double names were very common. You find them in the papyri and inscriptions.

Greek-speaking Jews often had Aramaic and Greek names, but Roman citizens could add a signum, a Roman name. Most, well, actually his Roman name is this trianomena. The signum is probably his name Saul, but most concur that Paul's signum is Saul.

Names often translate the meaning or is there a similar sound. The trianomena, the nomen was the inherited clan name. The prenomen, which was originally the distinguishing name in the clan, there are about 30 of them used.

Earlier, I think I mentioned that Seneca the Elder said he could repeat back 2,000 names in exactly the sequence in which he'd heard them. Well, he may have a limited number of names to work with, but anyway, by the late Republic, only half of these were used. They didn't work too well in distinguishing people because you had so many people with the same name.

So the cognomen became the new distinguishing name by the late Republic in the early empire. Paul lives in the early empire. The cognomen started as a nickname, but in the empire, it was the primary identifying name.

Often you could be named for your father or your ancestors. Paul was usually a cognomen and usually used only by Roman citizens. Well, how do Paul's hearers, these magistrates, react to what Paul says? 1638, Cicero and Quintilian tell us that a Roman citizen cried out that he was a citizen during a scourging and thereby humiliated his oppressors.

By waiting until after the beating to inform them, Paul and Silas placed the magistrates in an awkward legal position. Paul does something like this later after he's put in chains when he's about to be interrogated with a beating, but that was a different kind of beating. That was a *coercitio* that he could have died from, and you also need to keep in mind Paul was a bit older then.

And as we get older, sometimes the beatings may have more serious effects than when we're younger. In any case, now the magistrates, and not these apostles, not these missionaries, are forced to negotiate. By the way, the term apostle, Luke usually uses it just for the twelve.

In Acts 14, he makes an exception, and applies it to Barnabas and Paul as well. But usually, he doesn't even call Paul an apostle. He usually likes to apply it to the twelve.

Paul in his writings uses the title a lot more broadly and applies it to other people who are doing the kind of missionary work that he's doing, or other kinds of groundbreaking foundational things that he's doing. So, he's forced to negotiate. They're forced to negotiate, the magistrates.

Reports of their deed could even, if the law is enforced, even disqualify them from office. And in theory, although not very likely in practice, Philippi could be deprived of its status as a Roman colony or something like this. So why do Paul and Silas bring this up? Why are they concerned about their honor when Jesus says, turn the other cheek, don't worry about it? They needed to help secure the future safety of the fledgling Christian community, and this would put them in at least a somewhat better situation.

Although we learn from Philippians that the church still did have some problems there, but they may have reduced the problem somewhat. Persecution may not have been as strong for the Christians there as it was in Thessalonica. In any case, of course, they also had some people of means there like Lydia, and people of some status like the jailer may have been.

Verses 39 and 40. The magistrates had no legal authority to beat them, but they also had no legal authority to expel Roman citizens without trial. But a trial would bring up their own breach of law.

So, they're reduced to pleading. Well, Luke likes positive outcomes. We see that a lot in Luke's acts, even after very hard things.

He may be putting the best face on this, but still, they're expelled and they're still undoubtedly in pain from their beatings. So, after this, they're going to have a very long walk. They go back and they greet Lydia and the others first.

They don't leave directly, but the officials have to escort them out so that at least some people will be witnesses, their shame has been reduced because the officials have had to humiliate themselves, and humble themselves, even though they don't go publicly into the market and say we were wrong. The next place they're going to go after a very long walk, they're going to face turmoil in Thessalonica in chapter 17, verses 1 through 9. By the way, on many of these sites, we have a really good background that's been done. There's a lot of really good background that's been done on Philippi.

Jeffrey Wyma at Calvin College has done really good work in his Thessalonians commentary and other Thessalonians commentaries have done good work. A number of other scholars have written just on Thessalonica itself. So, Donfried, Jewett, and others have provided a lot of information on Thessalonica and these other places.

Well, in 17:1, we read about their journey to Thessalonica and it's summarized pretty quickly, but it didn't happen necessarily very quickly. It took them a few days to get there with their painful backs. They would be traveling along the Via Ignatia, which runs through Philippi and runs to the western coast of the Balkans from which they could sail to Italy.

They come to three different cities that are mentioned in Acts 17.1. The first is Amphipolis on the Strymon. That's a river I mentioned earlier of which a tributary was the Gangites. Amphipolis was 33 miles or over 50 kilometers past Philippi.

Probably with their wounds, they didn't walk at all in one day, although we don't know. That's a lot to cover in one day. You have to walk very fast.

20 miles was more common. So, probably they stayed overnight somewhere. Apollonia was a day's travel beyond Amphipolis.

It was 27 miles or some 40 kilometers further. Thessalonica was 35 miles or 55 kilometers further. So, in verse 1, we have a number of days summarized and Luke



has to summarize a lot to get through everything, even more than how quickly I talk to get through everything.

The Via Egnatia continued further west into Illyricum on the western end of the Balkans. Acts reports here only Paul's turn to the south off this road to Berea. We do know that Paul later did visit Illyricum.

It's mentioned in Romans 15.19, but that was probably on the very quickly summarized journey that you have in Acts 20:1-3. So, probably not at this point, but probably later he traveled there. Roads. Roman roads were usually no more than 20 feet or 6 meters wide, which by modern urban standards isn't very wide, especially now that so many people have cars and traffic jams and so on.

But those roads were better and safer than most European roads until 1850. So, this was a providential time to have to be walking on them in any case. Thessalonica.

They reached Thessalonica. It was Macedonia's largest port, a very strategic location for the good news spreading out from it. It was the capital of Macedonia's old second district, but more important now, it's the residence of the provincial governor.

The governor doesn't figure into this narrative. This is a local issue. The governor may not even be informed about it.

But Thessalonica had as many as 200,000 residents. So, it was a major city, certainly by ancient standards. The synagogue, where they are ministering in Chapter 17, Verse 2. Well, there were a lot of non-Greek cults or religions in Thessalonica.

Judaism is attested, more clearly attested archaeologically. The cult of Serapis and Isis, were Egyptian cults. Something that was Greek, but it was from the island of Samothrace, the Mysteries of the Kiberi.

All of these are found in Thessalonica. Paul is said to have spent three weeks ministering in the synagogue there. He probably spent even longer ministering in Thessalonica in general, because he received support from Philippi, Philippians 4, 15, and 16, which you may remember if you totaled up some of the other numbers.

It's about 95 miles or 145 kilometers away. So, he probably stayed there for a while. Word got back to Philippi.

They sent some funds to him. You can't stay with us, but we want to help in what Paul was doing. So, they sent him some funds.

Until then, he was doing manual labor, according to 1 Thessalonians 2.9. What that suggests is that he probably was there for a while. It could have been three weeks,

but most scholars think it was longer than that. Well, things didn't go over too well in the synagogue.

In the next synagogue he ended up in, people were eager to search the scriptures. They were open-minded to see what the scriptures actually said. But in Thessalonica, they were more interested in defending what they already believed.

We have people like that today. 17:4. Macedonian women had earlier gained a reputation for their influence. Alexander's mother, Olympias, was particularly known for her power.

And people didn't want to talk back to Olympias. Upper-class women could become patrons within a church or a synagogue. Their upper-class status and their donations made them very well-liked.

And this gave them a higher status than was available to them in society at large. So, you had a lot of upper-class women involved in these kinds of settings. Women didn't get circumcised, so it was easier for them to convert.

So, you have Paul and Silas and Timothy, and Luke is no longer with them after Philippi, winning a range of kinds of converts. But those who were opposed to them in the synagogue decided to stir up some trouble. It's probably for a reason like that that Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 2, speaks of how his own country people, the Judeans, persecuted the believers in Jesus who were in Judea.

Some people, by the way, have said that that is a later edition, but that is an act of convenience because they don't apparently want that to be in the text. There's no textual evidence for it being excluded. So, in any case, Paul had some success in Philippi and Thessalonica, but he ran into opposition in both places.

And those that they stirred up were those that are not usually very highly viewed in ancient literature. Demagogues who would stir up mobs were very looked down upon, but they stirred up idle, unemployed people in the marketplace. Now, it's not always somebody's fault to be unemployed, but we see that with the disabled man in Acts 3. Sometimes people can't get jobs.

It was a problem in Thessalonica. 1 Thessalonians 4:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3, Paul urges them to work. But yeah, you should provide for people who can't work or don't have something available.

But in this case, they were just being idle in the marketplace. That was a problem in many cities, but it was also a problem in Thessalonica that we read about even in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. They could be stirred to mob action as other ancient examples attest.

Jewish residents were a small minority in Thessalonica, so they needed some help to oppose Paul. Well, this mob is stirred up and it says it comes before the demos, the people, the citizen body. Well, that accurately fits what we know of Thessalonica because Thessalonica wasn't a Roman colony in contrast to Philippi.

It was a bigger city though, and it was called a free city, which means that they still had, well, they still had to obey Rome, but their city could enact their own policies. They had their own rulers in their own city locally, even though the Roman governor also lived there. It was a free city.

They had a gathered citizen body, the demos, that acted judicially. And they also had officials who were called polytarchs. It's interesting, you know, there was no list of what the different officials were called in different cities or different regions of the Roman Empire, but Luke gets this right like he always gets the titles of local officials right, stratagoi, and now polytarchs.

Polytarchs was a common name for officials in Macedonia, especially in Thessalonica. So, this would get Paul in trouble, but they don't get to Paul in because they can't find him at this point. So, they drag in his host.

They know where he lives. His host was probably a Jewish Christian who welcomed him into his home. I'm sorry, a Jewish person who welcomed him into his home and probably became a Jewish believer in Jesus.

But in verse 6, Jason was a common Greek name, but it was also used commonly among Hellenistic Jews. You have Jason of Thessaly, not to be confused with Thessalonica, in the Argonautica and traditions going way back before that. Jason was a common Greek name, but it also was often held by Jews.

Probably this is a Jewish host with whom they stayed while working there because normally that's what you would try to find. Also, Romans and even many officials, they didn't go out looking for things to try. Roman administration didn't have such a large, they didn't like to waste their budget on things like that.

It was locals were the ones who were supposed to accuse them. In this case, they're going to accuse them before Thessalonica's own Polyarchs. This is a local issue.

The Deletorius, and Deletorius were accusers. Under Roman law, somebody needed to prosecute a case. So, you'd wait for the accusers to bring the case and that's what happens here.

And what they accuse Paul of doing is proclaiming another king. Well, he's proclaiming the Messiah, verse three. Technically, yeah, the Messiah is another king.

Paul isn't speaking of political competition to the emperor, at least until Jesus comes back and then it won't be much of a competition. But this was considered treason. Proclaiming another king was considered treason against the majesty of the emperor.

So, when you put it in these terms, that could be a problem. Indicating signs of a new ruler's coming also implied predictions of the current emperor's demise. Violating imperial edicts, that's why astrologers sometimes got banished from Rome.

You know, a comet appears and they say, oh, that means a new ruler. Get out of Rome. You're not welcome here.

We don't want people stirring up trouble. Making people looking for a new ruler. Well, you read 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Paul speaks of the things he'd been teaching them about.

Some of those things have to do with Jesus coming and signs of Jesus coming. So, it's not surprising some people would twist his words and say, he's proclaiming another king, even Jesus. Jesus, after all, had been crucified in what charge? He'd been crucified in the charge of claiming to be king of the Jews.

He'd been crucified for sedition. Luke 22 and 23, especially Luke 23, Jesus is charged before Pilate as forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, even though he didn't forbid that. We know that explicitly in Luke 20, and for claiming to be a king.

Citizens had to pledge loyalty to Caesar and report any act of treason. Well, you can imagine how this would stir up a mob and stir up everybody's patriotic, sort of nationalistic loyalties as members of the empire. The gospel's opponents misunderstand here no less than do the Stoics and Epicureans in chapter 17, verse 18, when they think Paul is preaching strange gods.

We'll talk about that more when we get there. In verse 8, we have the Polyarchs. Also, they were in verse 6, the precise designation for Thessalonica's city officials.

The title is virtually restricted to Macedonia. Rome gave them freedom to run the city, although they would ultimately have to answer to Rome for any inappropriate actions because local officials in the Eastern Mediterranean were responsible for enforcing loyalty to Caesar. In verse 9, their host, verse 6, Jason, is held responsible for their actions.

What that means is he's required to post bond for them as if they were members of his household. Now, a fine was a pretty lenient penalty as far as Roman courts went, and a bond to curtail troublemakers was not unusual. Given the charge in verse 7,

had Paul himself been caught? In the face of the mob, the Polyarchs' officials sometimes chose politics over justice.

Paul might have been executed, but he'd have to be handed over to the Roman governor for that, and maybe he could have gotten out of it. But in any case, it was a very serious charge, and it's not surprising that he's sent away from town by the believers. Paul may want to speak out, but no, this is dangerous.

This is not like a beating like in Philippi. This is a very serious charge. But the Polyarchs probably didn't take it too seriously because the penalty is very lenient.

At the same time, the Polyarchs' decision would stand until they left office. So, for the sake of Jason and the other believers, they don't dare come back yet. Paul has to send his companions to find out what's going on there.

And in 1 Thessalonians 2.18, when he says, we wanted to come back, but Satan hindered us. Satan's hindering may have something to do with the decree until they left office. But he's going to get a better response in the next city he goes, at least for a while until some of the people from Thessalonica follow him.

He is going to get off the beaten path. He's not going to follow the Via Agnesia, just like earlier he got off the via Sebast and went down to Derbe, but they're going to find him anyway.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 17, Acts chapters 16 and 17.