

Be A Berean

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By: Pastor Greg Hocson

Text: *Acts 17:1-12*

Introduction

If you have been a Christian for as long as I have been, you have probably heard the challenge, "Be a Berean!" or "Be like the Bereans!" But what is a Berean? What does it mean to be like a "Berean"?

The Bible does not say much about the Bereans. But they were mentioned in the Book of Acts.

Acts 17:1-11

1: Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, **where was a synagogue of the Jews:** 2: And **Paul, as his manner was,** went in unto them, and three sabbath days **reasoned with them out of the scriptures,**

3: Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this **Jesus,** whom I preach unto you, **is Christ.**

4: And **some of them believed,** and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5: But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6: And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, **These that have turned the world upside down** are come hither also; 7: Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. 8: And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9: And when they had taken (money, bond, bail) security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

10: And the brethren (the believers) immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto **Berea:** who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11: **These were more noble** than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12: Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

Paul and Silas, came to Thessalonica, a great city of Macedonia, and preached the Gospel to the Jews. And for three sabbath days, he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, explaining and proving that the Messiah must suffer and die for the sins of men and that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.

2: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3: Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

The reaction to Paul's preaching

4: And some of them believed, and consorted (joined) with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

Some of the Jews believed and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great number of God-fearing Greeks and also a good number of women that is, wives of the principal men of the city.

But others did not believe and became angry over the conversion. These unbelieving Jews filled with anger and jealousy, hunted down Paul and Silas. They assembled a bunch of troublemakers and stirred a riot and attacked the house of Jason, a believer, thinking Paul and Silas were there. But when they could not find them, they took Jason and his friends instead and dragged them before the rulers of the city, making false accusation against them and Paul and Silas.

Because of what they heard, the rulers of the city and the crowd of people were completely alarmed. They made Jason and his friends post heavy bail and let them go while they investigated the charges (vv5-9).

Paul and Silas were sent away to Berea

10: And the brethren (the believers) immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Now, when the word of the Lord was preached to these people, they demonstrated **commendable characteristics that all of us would benefit if we practice them**. There are all kinds of reactions to the preaching of God's word. The Bereans demonstrated the proper attitude that all hearers should have.

So who were the Bereans?

The Bereans were Jews residing in the city of Berea in Macedonia. Though not much is said about these people in the Macedonian city of Berea, Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, gives them a very positive evaluation in Acts 17:11-12

11: **These were more noble than those in Thessalonica**, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12: Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

Though at the time when they heard Paul preached, they were not yet believing Christians. Yet Luke states they were more noble than the Jews in Thessalonica. What were the qualities of the

Bereans? What are these qualities that we could emulate from the Bereans so we too, could profit from the Word?

1. Their reception of the Word

11: These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that **they received the word** with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

First and foremost, the Bereans were “more noble” because of they were receptive to the Word of God. Unlike the unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica, the Bereans received the teaching of Paul and Silas.

We can assume that the Bereans were convinced that the Scriptures, which is the Old Testament, is the word of God.

Thank God not all the Jews in Thessalonica were prejudice to the word of God. A great number of them also believed. And to them Paul wrote:

1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, **ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.**

This is the first step to take if we are to profit from the word, we are to be fully convinced that the Bible is the infallible, inerrant and authoritative word of God.

2. Their readiness of the mind

The second thing that made them "more noble" is their readiness of mind.

11: These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word **with all readiness of mind**, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

a. They were teachable

They received the word with readiness of mind, meaning they were teachable. They were ready and willing to learn. They were willing to learn and adjust their own beliefs if needs be. How different the Bereans were as compared to those in Thessalonica.

They obeyed what James said in ...

James 1:21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and **receive with meekness the engrafted word**, which is able to save your souls.

How many times we hear, I was born a Baptist, I will die a Baptist. I was born a Catholic, I will die a Catholic. I was born a Muslim, I will die a Muslim. I was born an Atheist, I will die an Atheist. I was born a thief, I will die a thief. You see the unreasonableness of that philosophy. I commend their resolve and the zeal but resolve and zeal without knowledge is not commendable.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2: For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

I believe this was the problem of the unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica, they were not willing to learn.

b. They were eager

The Bereans received the word with all readiness of mind, that is they were eager to hear the word of God. There are people who are eager to hear special music, listen to worship bands, eager to watch a play or a funny skit, eager listen to stand up Christian comedian, but the Bereans were eager to hear the word of God.

Eagerness to know and learn the Word of God is a good sign that you have experienced the new birth.

1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 3: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Eagerness to know and learn the Word of God is a great encouragement to me as your pastor. It is very encouraging and refreshing to see and meet people who are eager to hear the word of God.

Eagerness to know and learn the Word of God will be reflected in our Church attendance and in our Sunday School participation.

c. They were open-minded

They were open-minded and not like the Jews in Thessalonica who were prejudice. There are people who are filled with prejudice. There are people who have preconceived ideas which are not based on reason and actual experience. Prejudice is not a virtue. Prejudice involves folly and shame!

Proverbs 18:13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

Our Lord spoke of hearers who are filled with prejudice ...

Matthew 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15: **For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed;** lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

"Prejudice is the lock on the door of the closed mind." - Anonymous

Prejudice is the Devil's tool to keep lost people from finding their way back to God. Prejudice keeps people from discovering the truth. Prejudice never saves a soul.

But thank God the Bereans did not practice prejudice! They did not shoot down Paul but were willing to listen to the other side of the story and not come to quick conclusions.

Are there any Bereans today? How about ourselves? Do we have a readiness of mind to investigate or are we motivated by prejudice?

3. Their search of the Scripture

What made the Bereans more noble and would benefit us if we emulate them? Their reception of the Word, their readiness of the mind but also their search of the Scriptures.

11: *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

True, the Bereans were open-minded but this does not mean they immediately believed everything that Paul preached to them. **Open-mindedness does not mean believing every claim and receiving all teachings as valid – that's being gullible, not open.** Do not confuse open-mindedness with gullibility.

“Keep an open mind, sure—but not so open that your brains fall out.”

These are two extremes we need to avoid when someone is preaching.

a. Prejudice

Prejudice is coming to a conclusion without investigation.

b. Gullibility

Gullibility is being easily cheated or tricked.

Thank God the Bereans were neither prejudice nor gullible. They demonstrated that by receiving the word with readiness of mind but they search the Scriptures to see whether what Paul's preaching were so.

They were diligent

11: *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

They diligently search the Scriptures. They did not treat the Scripture like we treat catalogues. They did not skim through it, they diligently search.

Why did they search the Scripture?

a. Because of false teachers

These Bereans search the Scriptures because they recognized that there are false teachers and teachings...

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Matthew 24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

And so they investigated. And Paul and Silas were not offended. Stay away from preachers and teachers who would discourage you from reading and studying God's word for yourself.

In fact, Paul encourages his hearers to do so.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 Quench not the Spirit. 20: Despise not prophesyings. 21: **Prove all things;** hold fast that which is good.

We are commanded by God to test teachings and spiritual experiences by God's infallible word.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

b. Because they want to know the truth

11: These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, **whether those things were so.**

They did not search the Scriptures to prove Paul is wrong and they are correct. The Bereans did not spend hours looking for gaps and mistakes in Paul's teachings but looked to see what was true of what they were saying. They wanted to know the truth.

What did they use as their basis for investigation?

What these Bereans used to check the validity of Paul and Silas' teaching was not their tradition, nor experience, not their denomination, nor church, nor their emotions and feelings, nor their own ideas and opinions, but the Holy Scriptures.

4. They were obedient

11: These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12: **Therefore many of them believed;** also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. They acted upon what they know. They believed.

James 1:22 But be ye **doers of the word, and not hearers only**, deceiving your own selves. 23: For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25: But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

They were more than hearers. Whatever may be our attitude in hearing God's word, we must be obedient to the truth.

Challenge

May the Lord help all of us today to have the spirit of the Bereans. May we not be like many professing Christians who believe the inspiration of the Bible but reject its authority.

May we all become like the Bereans, receiving the word with readiness of mind, and searching the Scriptures daily, whether the things preached to them are so and act upon what we are believe is from the Scriptures.

Be a Berean! Read, test, check and examine to know the truth. Don't let me or any one tell you what to believe. Don't believe it because I teach it or any preacher or church teaches it. Believe it because you are convinced it is the word of God. Let the Scriptures be your guide and authority. [Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.](#)

Are you a Berean? What's keeping you from being one? If you want to profit from the Bible like the Bereans, you have to be fully convinced that the Bible is the Word of God, receive it with all readiness of mind, search it daily and believe and act upon what you know and believe.

AMEN!