

"The Second Missionary Journey"**Part 11****Acts 15:41-18:22**

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we looked at how the unbelieving Jews stirred up the city against Paul and Silas. They spread two false statements about them.

1. They were turning the world upside down.
2. They were revolutionaries promoting a new King who was against Caesar.

These two accusations, especially the second one, caused the people of the city to be very alarmed. The Roman government would come down hard on the city of Thessalonica if they thought they were harboring revolutionaries.

Notice Acts 17:5-9

The missionaries were staying with Jason and the Jews knew it. They stormed Jason's house and brought him out. They then made Jason pay security and they released the other believers. The security was money taken from Jason and held to be sure he would not provide a place for them to lodge again. Paul and Silas would then flee to Berea.

➤ The Noble Bereans**Notice Acts 17:10**

Paul and Silas followed the Words of Jesus as they fled the persecution.

Matthew 10:22-24

²² *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

²³ *But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

²⁴ *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.*

God had earlier told Joseph and Mary to flee the persecution to protect Jesus.

Matthew 2:12-14

¹² *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.*

¹³ And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

The Jews in the Tribulation are told to flee the persecution.

Matthew 24:15-17

¹⁵ When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

¹⁶ Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

¹⁷ Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Now let us get back to Acts.

Notice Acts 17:10-11

There is much in verse 11 for us to consider. The Jews at Berea would not just take Paul's word as the Truth but instead they went to the Scriptures and searched them to be sure his words were supported by the Word of God.

Application:

These Jews at Berea set a great example for all believers to follow. For you all I will say I never want you to believe something just because it is what I say or what I believe. Do not be afraid to challenge what I teach you with the Bible. If what I teach is not supported with the Bible then you need to come to me and we need to talk. If what I teach is not accurate then I want to know and I certainly do not want you to accept it as the Truth. I do my best to support everything that I teach here with the Word of God. That is why I show so many verses on the screen. Notice the words of Albert Barnes.

"The preaching of ministers should be examined by the Scriptures. Their doctrines are of no value unless they accord with the Bible. Every preacher should expect his doctrines to be examined in this way, and to be rejected if they are not in accordance with the Word of God."

There are many churches today where the words that come from the pulpit are not in agreement with the Word of God. In many churches the Bible is given only a small part of

the service and when it is referenced it is used in a way to support an agenda. Notice the words of H. A. Ironside.

"We do not read of any other city wherein [Paul] was given so fair a hearing, wherein people were so honest in seeking to know whether the Word was really in accordance with Scripture or not. How blessed it would be to find more people today characterized by the same nobility as that which marked out these Bereans—a nobility of mind that led them to put away all prejudice and preconceived notions and to examine fairly the matters to which their attention was called, testing everything by Scripture!"

There is yet something else to see in verse 11 and for us to consider. We are told they searched the Scriptures daily. This was not the New Testament but it was the Old Testament that they were searching and studying. They did not have the New Testament. I point this out because of several churches close by that will focus only upon the writings of Paul. They will tell you that the rest of the Bible including the Old Testament is not for us. But the early church did not have the writings of Paul until later. The church was started around AD 30 in Acts 2 and it is believed the New Testament was not completed until right before AD 70. That was close to 40 years of not having the New Testament. Once the letters were written they may have had a copy of one or two letters to circulate but not the completed Bible as we have. The first widespread edition of the completed Bible including both the Old and the New Testament was put together in AD 400. So much of the studies of the early church was in the Old Testament.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

¹⁷ *That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

The Old Testament is all for us but it does not all pertain to us. As we study the Old Testament, we must rightly divide the Word of Truth. There are promises for Israel that do not pertain to us at all. Let me give you an example.

2 Chronicles 7:14

¹⁴ *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

This verse is not for the church. It is only for the nation of Israel to whom the land was given. Many people want to take this and apply it to the United States and you cannot do

that. The principles and the lessons from the Old Testament are for us and we do well to study them and apply them to our lives. Getting back to Acts, the Bereans were considered noble because they searched the Scriptures to be sure Paul's message was true. Notice the words of John Darby.

"When the apostle preached the truth at Berea, the Jews, his hearers, "searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so"; that is to say, they made use of the scriptures as an authority by which they judged the teaching even of an apostle; and they are commended for so doing. The inspiration then of the Old Testament is demonstrated, its authority is recognized by the Lord, and the whole — as we possess it — is declared to be authentic and to be clothed with an authority which nothing can invalidate."

Notice Acts 17:12

Here are the results of Paul preaching the Truth. Many were saved and of them were many Gentile men and women.

In verses 11-12 there is a major problem for Calvinists. Many Calvinists believe man in his depravity is so dead that he can do nothing. They teach that man must be regenerated before he can even believe on Jesus Christ. But here in these two verses we see that the spiritually dead Bereans were able to receive the Word with readiness of mind and they were able to search the Scriptures before they believed. Man is spiritually dead apart from Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

² *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

³ *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Unsaved man is dead in his sins but to be spiritually dead means "to be separated from God." That does not mean he cannot exercise faith. God gives man the free will to chose or to reject Jesus Christ.

Notice Acts 17:13-14

The Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea and they came to the city and stirred up the people there to the point that Paul had to again flee the persecution. We

also read that Silas and Timothy remained behind. Paul words to the Thessalonians gives us a little more insight into what took place.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-6

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

² And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

³ That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

⁴ For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

⁵ For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

⁶ But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

➤ Athens, the City of Idolatry

Notice Acts 17:15

Those who brought Paul to Athens then returned to tell Timothy and Silas to come and join Paul. What was Athens like? Notice the words of Bruce.

"Athens, although she had long since lost her political eminence of an earlier day, continued to represent the highest level of culture attained in classical antiquity. The sculpture, literature and oratory of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. have, indeed, never been surpassed. In philosophy, too, she occupied the leading place, being the native city of Socrates and Plato, and the adopted home of Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno. In all these fields Athens retained unchallenged prestige, and her political glory as the cradle of democracy was not completely dimmed. In consideration of her splendid past, the Romans left Athens free to carry on her own institutions as a free and allied city within the Roman Empire."

Notice Acts 17:16

It has been said that there were more idols in Athens than there were people. While Paul waited for the others he went on a sightseeing tour and he discovered that the city was in deep darkness. We can only imagine the grip that the demonic forces had on this city. Keep in mind that demons attach themselves to idols and with all the idols in the city we can understand that it was very dark spiritually speaking. This stirred the heart of Paul to want to see the people set free. The word "stirred" means that "his heart was troubled" for the people. Notice the article some Christian college students ran in a newspaper.

"Why are we Christians willing to follow Jesus into suffering in order to accomplish His mission of liberation? Because Jesus has changed our minds about a lot of things, and we can no longer tolerate the foolishness and futility that is passed out as wisdom at this university. We are tired of the "enlightenment" of this age which is blindly ignorant of its intellectual slavery to materialism and its contradictory obligation to ethical relativism. We are tired of seeing people's lives wasted and unfulfilled because of their submission to the established world order."

Conclusion:

This was how Paul viewed Athens and he was determined to carry the Gospel to the people. But he would not go alone. He waited for Timothy and Silas to join him. We live in a world much like Athens today. There are idols everywhere and people are enslaved to them. Satan is using the idolatry to blind the unsaved today so that they will not see their need to prepare for eternity. People today are dying in their sins as they cling to their idols. Might our hearts be burdened as Paul's heart was for the people of Athens. Lord, let us see our world through your eyes.

Matthew 9:35-36

³⁵ *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

³⁶ *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*