

The “Noble” Bereans

V. 10. “*And the brethren 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 the honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. (13) But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came hither also, and stirred up the people. (14) And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea; but Silas and Timotheus abode there still,*” Acts 17:10-14.

These scriptures belong to a general context which sets forth the labors of the apostle Paul and his co-laborers on what is commonly referred to as “Paul’s second missionary journey,” a preaching trip of Paul which is discussed somewhat at length in Acts 15:40-18:22. Up to this point on this journey Paul had departed from Antioch of Syria, traveled “*through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches,*” Acts 15:41, then on to Derbe and Lystra, traveling from there to Phrygia and Galatia, then to Mysia and “*down to Troas,*” Acts 16:1-8. At Troas “*a vision appeared to Paul in the night,*” in which “*there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us,*” Acts 16:8-9. Correctly concluding that “*the Lord had called*” them to preach the gospel in Macedonia, Paul and his co-laborers (Silas, Timothy, and Luke), traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia where they converted Lydia and her household, and the jailer and his household, Acts 16:11-40. Upon leaving Philippi, they journeyed to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews, where Paul preached the gospel of Christ, Acts 17:1-3. From the standpoint of “visible results,” their labors in Thessalonica were very successful, in that “*some*” of the Jews were persuaded, plus a “*great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women,*” Acts 17:4. However, trouble soon ensued because of unbelieving Jews who became “*envious,*” taking “*some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar,*” accused Paul and company with having “*turned the world upside down,*” and having acted “*contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another King — Jesus,*” Acts 17:5-7. For their safety, the brethren “*sent Paul and Silas by night to Berea,*” and upon their arrival, “*they went into the synagogue of the Jews,*” and continued preaching, Acts 17:11.

Berea was described by Cicero as a town “off the road,” which lay south of the Egnatian highway; it was roughly 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica. It was also the home of Sopater who later accompanied Paul on a portion of his “third missionary journey,” Acts 20:4. For the most part, however, Berea was regarded as a city of very little cultural and political importance.

But it is amazing how the same **people** can preach the same **gospel** to different people and experience dramatically different **results**. The great sin of the first century Jews in general was in their refusal to honestly examine the claims of the gospel. But in delightful contrast to the “*mob*” (NKJV) action of many of the Jews at Thessalonica, Acts 17:5, the people at Berea were described as being “*more noble*” (“*fair minded,* NKJV) than those

in Thessalonica; they were “*more noble...in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so,*” Acts 17:11. From that day until now, Bible students have spoken often of the “*noble*” Bereans, and have cited them as an example of how people should receive the gospel. Surely their example deserves closer scrutiny than just hurriedly reading the text, and then going on the next section of scripture. So, we ask:

Why Were The Bereans Called “*More Noble?*”

1. They “*received the word,*” Acts 17:11, in contrast to so many others who “*stopped their ears*” when God’s word was proclaimed, Acts 7:57.

2. They “*received the word with all readiness of mind,*” Acts 17:11. Contrary to so many, they were eager to hear the word; they possessed that “*hunger and thirst after righteousness,*” Matt. 5:6, which is so essential to the proper response to the gospel message.

3. They “*received the word with all readiness of mind, and sought the scriptures,*” Acts 17:11. Whereas so many are searching for gold, silver, pleasure, fame, and fun, these people were searching “*the scriptures,*” and that is so important, for by the scriptures we shall be judged in that last day, John 12:48.

4. “*They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily,*” Acts 17:11. Their investigation of “*the scriptures*” was an on-going part of their lives; they did this on a “*daily*” basis. They were like the “*blessed,*” happy person of Psalm 1:2, whose “*delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*”

5. “*They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so,*” Acts 17:11. They did as Paul had admonished the Thessalonians to do, namely to “*prove all things; hold fast that which is good,*” I Thess. 5:21. They did, as all of us are commanded to do, that is to “*believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world,*” I John 4:1. They reacted as did the faithful ones at Ephesus who “*tried*” those who claimed to be apostles, but were “*found*” to be “*liars,*” Rev. 2:2. You will please note that they compared what they heard with what is recorded in “*the scriptures,*” not in some church manual, discipline, or denominational creed book.

6. Upon examining what they heard in the light of “*the scriptures,*” they were obedient! The next verse (v. 12) begins with “*therefore,*” meaning as a result of their having examined “*the scriptures,*” v. 12, “*many of them believed; also of honorable women, which were Greeks, not a few.*” They demonstrated that “*honest and good heart*” which Jesus mentioned in the Parable of the Sower, the kind of heart which is so essential for the proper hearing of, and response to, the word of God, Luke 8:15.

Conclusion:

Yes, Bible students the world over applaud and commend the “*noble*” or “*fair-minded*” Bereans, and that is as it ought to be. Sadly, however, many commend the “*noble*” Bereans, while neglecting to follow their example!

Kind reader, how is it with you? When you hear a preacher preach, do you receive “*the word with all readiness of mind,*” or do you wish he would shut up so you could “beat the Baptists to the restaurant?” Do you search “*the scriptures daily,*” or do you just pause to read

when it is convenient? Do you compare what you hear the preacher preach with what you read in “*the scriptures?*” Remember, God doesn’t want “the preacher” doing **your** thinking for you! He could be wrong! In fact, the world is filled with “*false prophets,*” who “*come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves,*” Matt. 7:15. We wish it were not so, but the world is filled with “*blind leaders of the blind,*” Matt. 15:14, who are all too ready to scratch the “*itching ears*” of those who refuse to “*endure sound doctrine,*” 2 Tim. 4:3. That was true in the first century; it is true in the 21st century, so we all need to be like the “*noble*” Bereans, lest we be led astray by those who, either knowingly or ignorantly, “*pervert,*” Gal. 1:7-8, the gospel of Christ. Your soul is too important, eternity is too long, and the alternatives are too great for you to take any other course of action.

*** —Bobby Witherington