

(Acts) Reasoning From the Scripture

by Brian Brodersen

Paul's message of the Christ's suffering and resurrection was met with both persuasion and persecution in Thessalonica.

Duration: 51:40

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Evangelism Strategies"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of following the example of the Bereans in studying and seeking the Lord. He encourages the congregation to not be intimidated by the increasing intolerance in the world towards the Christian faith. The speaker emphasizes the need to focus on the Word of God rather than getting caught up in worldly wisdom and political debates. He highlights how Paul strategically chose key cities to spread the gospel, knowing that people passing through would be influenced by the solid church communities established there. The speaker also mentions the significance of Christ's suffering and resurrection, which the Jewish people should have known but missed.

Transcript

Let's open up tonight to Acts once again, this evening to the 17th chapter. And as we come to chapter 17, we're just right back in the thick of all the excitement of Paul's second missionary journey. And so let's have a quick word of prayer and then we'll jump into it.

And now, Lord, again, as we come to this exciting adventure that you've had penned for us of the life of Paul and those things that were happening during that time, the churches that were being planted and how the gospel was being spread. Lord, we pray once again tonight that you would inspire us and Lord, that as we behold these men and the activity and what they were doing so long ago to remember and to realize that, Lord, that work still being carried on today by us. And so, Lord, move us tonight, speak to us, challenge us.

Lord, all those things we want you to do by your spirit this evening, we pray. Amen. Amen.

So chapter 17 of Acts, Paul has left Philippi. And there in Philippi, as you remember, perhaps if you were studying with us, they encountered some pretty intense persecution, ended up being beaten, ended up being thrown into prison. But yet we saw how the Lord's hand was in it and how God used even their imprisonment to bring the Philippian jailer and his family to the Lord.

And then, of course, there was that beautiful work that began there in the house of Lydia. So having left now Philippi, actually having been requested to leave by the magistrates, they are heading now southwest in an endeavor to come to the city of Thessalonica. And so we read in verse one of 17, chapter 17.

Now, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Remember, in Philippi, there was no synagogue and therefore they went to the riverside where there were a few Jewish people who were having a time of prayer. But because there were evidently not 10 men in the community, there was no synagogue.

But Thessalonica was a different story. Thessalonica had a thriving Jewish community. And so there was a synagogue there and that's the first place the apostle Paul would stop.

So then Paul, as his custom was, he went into them and for three Sabbaths, he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead. So Paul goes into the synagogue and he reasons with them from the scriptures. You know, that's what's to be happening in a church, a gathering together of God's people, a place of worship.

The scriptures are to have a prominent place within the worship service of God's people. And of course, we do have that here. And that's, I believe, one of the main reasons why God is so blessed.

The work of Calvary Chapel right here at Costa Mesa and all throughout the world, because we are honoring the word of God, because we're setting forth the word of God as the priority within the life of the Christian. And we're seeking to expound it and to meditate on it and to understand it and to obey it. And that, of course, is what the Lord desires and that's what he blesses.

So Paul reasons with them from the scriptures. He doesn't reason philosophically with them. He doesn't talk to them about the political situation there in Thessalonica.

He doesn't get caught up into that sort of thing, which is an easy thing sometimes to get caught up in. And there's a big temptation at times for church leaders to sort of, you know, get off on tangents and be talking about everything else you've probably noticed as you know, those of you that come to the study here on Saturday night with me or maybe you come out on Monday night, you've probably noticed that I don't get a whole lot of or I don't get involved a whole lot in current events and statistics and politics and those kinds of things. Sometimes we'll make references to those sorts of things.

But the way I figure it is that if you want information about that stuff, you can turn on the news. You don't need to come to the church to get my perspective on it. But I figure if you're coming to the church, you're not coming to get a news report.

You're coming to get fed the word of God. And so that's what we aim to do, to stick with the scriptures and to unfold them to you, because that's where life is. You know what I mean? You can get all this information, you can get human wisdom and philosophy and you can get a political perspective and all of that, you know, but at the end of the day, it just what what does it do? It doesn't have that transforming power.

And sometimes I like to get in political debate and things of that nature. But yet when I do that, I find that, you know, if I walk away from it without interjecting something about the Lord, I walk away from it feeling like what a waste. I might have just proven that my point was better than their point.

But what what's the difference? What does it really matter? And so the scriptures, that's where we want to stay focused. So that's what Paul was doing. And he was explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead.

Now, you see, this is something that the Jewish people should have known. But yet they missed it and they missed it because. They didn't really want to see it.

They were looking for something else from God, they were looking for God to take care of all of their problems on an external level, but they weren't necessarily all that concerned about their own personal spiritual condition. And so when they studied the scriptures and when they, you know, would gather together, it was all, you know, pretty much about how this can help me get on better in life or how this can help me to prosper among the Jews. There was really in some way sort of a prosperity doctrine.

They believe that if God's blessing was upon your life, it was indicated by material prosperity. And they saw that as being directly connected to your faithfulness to keeping the law. And there were there were certain promises in the scriptures that would have led them to draw those kinds of conclusions.

But there were also many other things that the scriptures were speaking about that they were missing. They were overlooking the scriptures, were speaking about the bigger issues of sin and separation from God and impending judgment and how that was all going to be resolved. And that, of course, was the message that was woven into the Old Testament about the Messiah, that the Christ, that he would come and that he would suffer and that he would rise again from the dead.

So to people that you would have expected to know this stuff, Paul has to go back to the scriptures and show them, look, this is what our scriptures really teach about the Messiah. You see, because their view of the Messiah was reduced to he was pretty much a political savior. He was someone who was going to come and overthrow the Roman yoke and set up an everlasting Jewish kingdom and they were going to rule the world.

And that was that was what they were anticipating. But Paul comes and he says, oh, no, you don't understand. Let me show you from the scriptures.

And he goes back to the scriptures and he shows them how the Christ had to suffer and to rise again from the dead. And then he continues on saying this, Jesus, whom I preach to you, he is the Christ. So really he had a twofold objective.

First of all, to convince them that the scriptures taught that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. That was his first objective. And secondly, it was to show them that Jesus of Nazareth had fulfilled the requirements of the Messiah laid down in the Old Testament through his life.

And so Paul would go through and rehearse the life of Jesus. He probably would have begun with the birth of Jesus, how he came through the Virgin Mary, how he was part of the tribe of Judah, the tribe through which redemption would come, how he belonged to the Davidic line. He was part of that kingly heritage and really the heir to Israel's throne.

And then he would have gone on to talk about his suffering that was prophesied in Isaiah, but fulfilled through his crucifixion and so forth. And so this is what Paul spent his time doing there in the synagogue in Thessalonica for three consecutive Sabbath days. And some of them were persuaded and a great multitude of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women joined Paul and Silas.

So after three weeks of ministering in the synagogue, there were some positive results. There were some among the Jews that were persuaded, but a great multitude of the devout Greeks. Now, remember, in the synagogues, it was obviously, you know, initially and predominantly a Jewish environment.

But there were many Greeks or non-Jews, Gentiles who had become disillusioned and discontented with their various religious expressions, the Greek religions, the Greek philosophies, the Roman religions, the Roman philosophies and all these things. Of course, like the equivalent today, these things don't answer the deeper issues within the human heart. And so there were many Greeks that were attracted to the synagogue because of this message of the one God.

And they were embracing that and they were generally the ones who were the first to lay hold of the message when the apostles would come and preach Jesus. And so a great multitude of the devout Greeks and also a large number of the leading women. The leading women in the community, they also joined themselves to Paul and Silas.

Now, just to back up for a second, the city of Thessalonica was really the the key city of that area of Macedonia. It was a free city and it was the leading city in that particular area. And one of the very significant things about it is the main road known as the Via Ignatia that ran from the Middle East all the way into deep into Europe, passed right through Thessalonica.

And so Thessalonica was one of those sort of crossroad places. It was a place where people from all over the world would pass through. And so Paul.

Would often go to a place like that, he would try to get into key places where he knew that if he could have an influence in that city, the influence would quickly spread beyond the city because of, you know, this sort of a situation that people are going to be passing through. And if there could be a solid church developed in that community, then. What a great opportunity for the word to be spread out from there all over the world, because people are going to be passing through, they're going to stop in at the church, they're going to get a solid witness from people in the community, and then they're going to go back to where they came from and they're going to take that with them.

And I really I like that perspective that Paul had, and I tend to agree that that is an exciting sort of an opportunity to be able to establish a ministry in a place like that. That was much the case for us when we were pastoring in London, having people from all over the world and, you know, many, many times having people come and be there for a period of time. And then I remember several occasions where people would come after months and months of studying with us and they would say something like, well, I've been here in London, I've been working and in the course of my time here, I discovered your church and God has really touched my life through the Bible.

And now I'm going to go back to my nation and I want to take this message with me. And that was always so thrilling to hear that sort of thing. That's what Paul was seeking to accomplish as he went into Thessalonica.

So there's there's a good response after these these sessions in the synagogue. But. As was often the case, the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace and gathering a mob, they set all the city in uproar.

This would happen quite often. As Paul would go from place to place, he would generally find that there would be a warm reception from the Gentiles, but a lot of opposition and resistance coming from the Jews. And now here we find that the Jews who didn't believe they became envious.

You see, in this sort of a community, these Jews in the synagogue, they they did have a bit of a prestigious position. Among those Gentiles who were seeking after truth and would come and join themselves, they would come into a synagogue and the Jews, of course, would be highly respected by them. Because after all, they learned that that the Jews were the chosen people.

And so many of the Gentiles would would look up to the Jews and admire them and make large contributions to their synagogues and things of that nature. But now Paul and Silas come into town and a lot of these prominent Greeks, they're now leaving the synagogue. They're going with these guys because they're hearing a message that is telling them that they can have a relationship with the God of Israel, not on a, you know, sort of a second class citizen basis like they were as proselytes in the synagogue, but they could have a direct relationship.

And so they were leaving the synagogue to go and worship with the apostles, and this made the Jews angry and caused them to become envious. And so they took evil men from the marketplace, the loafers, the those guys that would just hang around looking for trouble, basically. And in well, you can find this anywhere, I guess, but, you know, in places even today where there is sort of a marketplace or a central part of the community, a lot of times you'll you'll see these kinds of people just loafing around, doing nothing, really just looking for excitement and quite often looking to get in trouble.

And, you know, if there's any sort of. Dastardly thing that they can get involved in there, they're quick to do it, and that was the case back then as well. And so they gathered a mob and they set all the city in an uproar and they attacked the house of Jason and sought to bring them out to the people.

So Jason evidently was someone who was housing the apostles and probably there was some Bible study and that sort of thing going on in his home. Somehow they identified Jason with them, so they attacked his house. This mob did.

But when they did not find them, Paul and Silas, they dragged Jason and some of the brethren to the rulers of the city. So they come in to Jason's house, they ransacked the place looking for Paul and Silas, they're not there. And so they dragged Jason off to the magistrates, to the rulers.

Now, just on an incidental side note, the word rulers here. Is an interesting word from the Greek, it's polytarchs. And the interesting thing about this is.

It rarely occurs. It doesn't occur at all again in the New Testament, but it rarely occurred even in the literature of the day. Now, as I've mentioned before, in our study of the Acts of the Apostles, like many other books of the Bible, there have been the critics who have attacked it and they've often tried to show that Luke didn't really know what he was talking about, or perhaps the author of Acts was somebody who lived at a much later date.

And they try to discount the validity of the book of the Acts. And interestingly, this one word had caused many of the skeptics to say, oh, you see, we knew all the time that this was fraudulent. Luke refers to these polytarchs there.

That was not a title by which any of the officials would have gone at that time and in that region. That's what they would say. But as is so often the case with the passing of time and with archaeological discoveries and so forth, they have found that that's exactly the title that the rulers in Thessalonica went by in Thessalonica alone.

The other the other areas, the other cities, no one would use that title, but in that specific place, they would use that title. And so far from Luke being inaccurate, not knowing anything that he was talking about, Luke proves to be totally accurate and shows that the skeptics don't know what they're talking about. So they were brought before these polyarchs, these rulers, and they were crying out as they brought them forward.

These who have turned the world upside down have come here to these who have turned the world upside down now. That is the translation that we're familiar with, those of us who have been reading the Bible for a while, we've we've heard that term many times, those who have turned the world upside down. But, you know, actually, that is not the best translation of what they said.

And it's important to bring this out because there was something very, very serious that was going on here, something that could have resulted in the condemnation of the apostles. Had these rulers been of a different mindset, this could have led to the arrest and execution of the apostles. Because what was actually being claimed here by the leaders of the mob was that these men were inciting revolt against the emperor.

They were accusing them of treason and treason, of course, was punishable by death. So it wasn't really that they were acknowledging that they had turned the world upside down or right side up, as we have often thought would be a better way to look at it. But what they were really doing was saying these who have upset the civilized world.

These who are causing political insurrection, they have come here to us now and they are seeking to do that here in our midst, so they were trying to get these guys arrested on the charge of treason, which would have resulted in their condemnation, which would have resulted in their death. Now, Jason, they went on to say, has harbored them and so they're wanting to implicate Jason in the whole thing. And these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.

So now remember, the Jews are behind this, these these disgruntled Jews who have lost their some of their key supporters out of the synagogue. They are wanting to get these guys killed. And so they're basically, you know, seeking to convince the magistrates that that these guys are trying to overthrow the empire.

They're revolutionaries, they're trying to bring in a new government under this king, Jesus. You know, it's interesting that back. At the very trial of Jesus, we find similar kinds of things being said by the Jewish leaders at the time.

They they were saying this man, he's making himself a king and they were seeking to pit Jesus against Caesar even back when Jesus was on trial there. And perhaps you remember as Pilate was trying Jesus and as he was, you know, really seeking to release him because he knew he was innocent and he knew that it was only because of envy that they had delivered him up. He at one point he said, you know, he presented to he presented Jesus to them and he was seeking to appeal to them that they might have some sort of mercy because he had been beaten.

He'd been he had been severely whipped and been crowned with the thorns and all of that. And he was trying to appeal to some mercy. And he says, look, behold, the man.

And, you know, he and Pilate says, this is your king. And they began to chant. We have no king but Caesar.

That was under the direction of the high priest. That's how wicked the leadership of Israel had become at that time. And we see here these leaders of the synagogue are doing the same thing here.

They're basically pitting Jesus against Caesar. And so they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

So the magistrates, these politics that we mentioned earlier, the rulers, they thank God, were much more rational about the whole thing. And rather than buying into this lie that that they were trying to pass off regarding the apostles, they simply took a financial deposit from Jason and said, look, these guys that are staying with you need to get out of town. And if we find them, you're out the money.

So he probably had to put down a substantial amount of money. And that was a guarantee that this kind of activity would not continue on in the community. That's basically how they dealt with it.

And so the brethren then immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night and they went then to Berea. Now, a question arises that I think is somewhat interesting, and therefore we ought to quickly address it. The question arises, how much time did Paul spend in Thessalonica? There's the reference to the three Sabbath days.

And because of that, some people have concluded that all of this took place in a three week period of time. But it doesn't seem to me that that would really be the case. Luke is famous for being very, very brief and passing over sometimes long periods of time in one sentence.

He will cover sometimes a couple of years. And I would think myself that it was probably more like six months to a year that the apostles ministered in Thessalonica. But initially there was this three week stint in the synagogue.

Luke doesn't go into detail about what they did after the three weeks in the synagogue, but there are a number of reasons why I believe that it was a longer period than three weeks. Reason number one is because the Philippian church on two occasions sent support to Paul while he was in Thessalonica. It would have been difficult if that for that to even happen in a three week period of time.

It would have been impossible. It was a hundred mile journey between the two places. And so yet the Philippians sent to Paul, Paul mentions it in his epistle to them on two different occasions.

Also, Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians later, he referred to the fact that he supported himself while he was there through manual labor. So Paul evidently got a part time job while he was in town. And so he gets support from the Philippians.

He's got a part time job that, of course, is not going to fit into a three week period. And then thirdly, as we go into the letters of Paul to the churches of of the Thessalonians, what we find ultimately is that the majority of converts were Gentiles from an idolatrous background. And yet that connection with the Gentiles isn't even really mentioned by Luke here in his account of the ministry there in Thessalonica.

And so it was probably a longer period of time, six to nine months, maybe even about a year, perhaps. But a couple of other side points, Paul, in ministering to. The believers there.

Or, you know, establishing this church and teaching them, one of the interesting things that comes out in the Thessalonian epistles is that Paul taught them a lot about the end times, he taught them a lot about the second coming of Christ. And actually, the first and the second letter to the Thessalonians are our key. Bits of information for us in the New Testament regarding the events of the last days, we have teaching regarding the rapture, we have teaching regarding the coming of the Antichrist and his ultimate destruction, teaching regarding the second coming of the Lord.

And the thing that I find intriguing about this is that. That would have been itself somewhat of a risky thing to do at the time, you know, the Roman emperors, like most rulers, were paranoid, they were very paranoid about somebody coming along and usurping their authority. Remember back at the birth of Jesus, Herod was the king of Judea at the time, and these wise men come from the east and they come to Herod.

And do you remember the question they asked him? They said, can you tell us where he that is born the king of the Jews might be? And that sent Herod into a total fit. He was the king of the Jews, what are they talking about? But in his paranoia, you remember, he kind of played along with it because he wanted to find out more about this. And later on, he would send his soldiers into that area of Bethlehem to slay all the all of the male children two years old and under seeking to protect his own throne.

And the same was true with the emperors. Augustus and Tiberius both had given decrees. That you could not speak in a predictive manner.

About any sort of coming kingdom or anything like that, that was actually a decree from Caesar, Tiberius stated that if a person were to speak predictively, that person was to be executed. So Paul, he was very bold. He went into these places and he did preach predictively.

He did preach that there was a coming kingdom. He did preach that there was a king besides Caesar. And these, of course, would be the things that would have eventually gotten the Christians into the big trouble that led to the great persecutions.

But, you know, it's still true today in the communist countries. There is no freedom to teach the scriptures or to proclaim another kingdom or another king. One of the first things that they would begin to forbid in totalitarian countries was the teaching of the prophetic books of the Bible.

It would start with that and then eventually, of course, it would just go to a prohibition against teaching the scriptures at all. But often it would start with those prophetic books. Because of the threat to, you know, that particular regime that was established, so that's what Paul was involved in doing.

Another thing that was. Common at the time was that the the political leaders and, of course, many of the religious leaders greatly frowned upon any attempt to bring people from one religion to another proselytizing was greatly frowned upon. They felt that you ought to just leave everybody to their own religion and because, you know, when you start interfering, then you start creating the possibility of social disruption and things of that nature.

And so they were very much much against that kind of thing going on. These guys, the apostles, had to go against the tide of the culture. That's the point that I'm making to you.

And we're finding more and more that that kind of thing is happening today. History just repeats itself over and over again. But we're hearing so much about that today, this whole thing of proselytizing that that is a bad thing, that you should just let people believe what they were brought up believing and you shouldn't disturb that or challenge that.

And we need to just be quiet. And they're actually hoping to pass laws that would prohibit people from spreading their religion and presenting their religion as as, you know, better than another religion or that sort of thing. Can you believe it? People in our country are contemplating those kinds of things.

Politicians, people in power, they want to see those kinds of laws enacted. Where no one can say that Jesus is the only way to God, they're actually discussing that in some political environments, getting rid of that sort of thing. So things haven't changed, but like the apostles of old, we we have to just go against the tide so much of the time.

And we can't be swayed by public opinion, we can't be pressured into compromising, but I'm afraid that many times that is what happens even with Christian people. I was standing out in front of the office yesterday, a lady came up and told us a quick story about how she's been put on sort of involuntary leave from her job two or three different times without pay because she has dared to interject her Christian faith into her workplace. And then which, you know, that was unfortunate, but she seemed to be pretty resilient, she wasn't all that concerned about it.

But the the more troubling thing was when she was telling us that her superiors, her immediate superiors are Christians as well. And they're the ones that are writing her up and they're the ones that are bringing this kind of discipline against her. Although they're professing Christians.

They're they're going with the the politically correct party line, separation of church and state, they say, oh, you can't talk about Jesus on the job. You know, this is where as Christian people, we have to realize that we have a higher allegiance. Our allegiance is to be to God and for the most part, we certainly are to obey the laws of the land.

Christians are to be lawful people. But when the laws begin to come into conflict with the commandment of God, that's when we have to draw the line. And some people say, oh, but you don't know, I if I if I did that, I might lose my job and I've got all these bills I need to pay and all, you know, this responsibility, I can't afford to be out of work.

I I've got to I've got to just toe the line in this area. I can't let my Christian faith come in and interfere with my job. That's the person who's not trusting God, don't you think that God can take care of you? I would be willing to bet that God had even a better job for you if you got fired from one for standing up for him.

The Lord's not going to let you sink, he's going to take care of you, he's going to bless you, he'll move you on to something else. But a lot of times we let those kinds of things intimidate us and hold us back and keep us from speaking out when we should speak out. There's a lot of pressure in our culture today to be quiet, isn't there? Just, you know, don't rock the boat.

Don't say anything that's going to upset anybody. Don't, you know, don't give the impression that people need to take Jesus seriously. But we have to do that, that's what we're called to do, that's what this whole thing is all about.

And sometimes you end up in trouble when you do it. Paul was always in trouble, but, you know, he just seemed to go with the flow, he seemed to roll with the punches. And so they took him and they basically kicked him out of Thessalonica.

We don't know that Paul ever made it back. He wanted to go back, he wrote them and expressed his deep desire to return and visit them. But he said an interesting thing.

He said, you know, we've many times sought to come back to you, but Satan has hindered us. And I think Paul saw through that whole thing that had gone on there and the decisions that came down from from the rulers and probably there was a legal decision that was made. These guys were probably banned from the city.

It was a legal ban that they couldn't alter. But Paul looked at that and saw that as as Satan's work, keeping him out. But the Lord still did a great work in that place.

And if you read, I'd encourage you to read the Thessalonian letters, because Paul goes on to talk about even though they were in the midst of persecution. The believers there suffered after the apostles left, that their testimony went out in a powerful way to that entire region. But they were sent away from there and they went by night to Berea.

Now, when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews once again into the synagogue. Now, Berea was a considerably different kind of a place where, as we've been saying, Thessalonica was, you know, sort of a cosmopolitan, the whole world passing through there. Berea was more of a, you know, off the beaten path kind of a place.

But that's where Paul ended up, probably because he was aware of the fact that there was a synagogue there. And so they went into the synagogue and they began to speak to the Jews. And notice what it says in verse 11.

It says these were more fair minded than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness. And search the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. So he commends the Jews in Thessalonica, in Berea, he says they were actually more fair minded.

You see, what Paul is saying is that these guys were not going to make a decision before they had heard the facts. What what he's implying is that in Thessalonica, many of them had already made up their mind and they didn't want to be confused by the facts. You know, we meet people like that all the time, don't we? People that they just don't want to know, they don't want to hear it.

And instead of listening and considering, maybe they're wrong, maybe their position is wrong, maybe their view about Jesus Christ, the Bible, Christianity, maybe maybe they've got it wrong. They don't want to know. They don't want to hear anything.

They're just completely closed minded. That's tragic. It's unfortunate.

It's sad. There are a lot of people like that, though, but these in Berea, they were not like that. They weren't gullible, they weren't ready to just take anything the apostle said, it just say, OK, well, if you said it, that's it.

And we're not even going to question it. They weren't like that, but they were willing to listen to what he said and then to go back and research it and see if this guy was telling the truth. And that's the way a

smart person approaches these kinds of issues.

The wise person listens and considers, and before that person makes a decision, they research it themselves, they look into it, they find out, are these things true? I wonder how many people we could find if we were to go out searching. How many people we could find that have dismissed the claims of Christ. The message of the gospel without ever giving it any serious thought themselves, I would imagine we could find thousands upon thousands of people.

They just take everything on hearsay and, you know, you run into this all the time. You meet people that when they find out you're a Christian, they say things like, oh, how can you believe the Bible, man? Don't you know, it's full of contradictions and you say, well, can you give me an example? Oh, well, there's lots of them, you know, I you know, well, I know. But could you just give me one? Well, no, you know, and then the more you talk, the more you find out they don't they've never looked into it.

They don't know if they've just heard somebody say that. And so they'll make these kinds of claims, all the Bible's scientifically inaccurate, it's been proven really. Well, can you give me some evidence for it? Oh, well, there's tons of it out there, you know.

Well, can you just give me like one example? Well, you know, and no, you can't because it's not. But people go with that, and I think you could do that with a number of things, I would imagine, but this is the one thing you can't do it with because your eternal destiny is in the balance. You can do it with it, but it's surely a stupid thing to do.

This is the one thing that you really need to consider, because if the claims of Jesus Christ are true. Then he's the one person in the universe you need to be mostly concerned with. If they're not true, then you can just dismiss it and go on your merry way.

But you ought to really make sure they're not true if you think they're not before you dismiss it. And that's what these people in Berea did. They were fair minded, they were they weren't unreasonable.

In other words, they received the word with all readiness and they searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Now, of course, they found out that they were so. They found out that what the apostle was saying was exactly what the scriptures had said.

And when a person takes the time to do the research, that is indeed what you find, that the scriptures are trustworthy, that the Christian faith is viable, that it's historically verifiable, that it's a completely reasonable proposition. There's nothing unreasonable about it at all. When you look at what's said, when you look at what the scriptures declare and you look at the results of it and all those things, I mean, to me, the Christian faith is the most reasonable proposition in the world.

And I just can't believe that anybody would reject it. It just seems to me that you have to put your reason on the shelf to take that position. One of the things that I think it's important to point out.

Is that. These Bereans were allowed to challenge the apostle, they were free to question. That's the mark of true religion.

A characteristic of true religion is that it allows itself to be examined. That is not true of the false religious systems, you can't examine them, you can't question them. If you were a Muslim and you went into one of the clerics.

And you began to question the Koran. Oh, this would be very, very troubling. You can't question you must take the word of the leaders and they speak with absolute dogmatic authority.

That this is the word of God and there is no questioning it, period. And that's true. Of the various religions of the world, it's true of the cults.

You can't have honest inquiry, you can't really have questions, you can't challenge, you can't look and say, well, wait, you know, I don't see that that seems wrong to me, that doesn't seem to hold water, that argument or or that seems to contradict this. You're not free to do that. The different groups that go from door to door and want to get you to join their organizations, they do not allow their people to actually let you challenge them.

They teach their people as long as they have the platform, as long as they're doing the talking, they should stay and talk. As long as they can, but once you start doing the talking, once you start challenging, once you start interjecting, once you start debating with them, they often will discourage them or don't go back there. Because they don't want anything to come in and challenge the indoctrination that they have given to them.

Because they're insecure that people are going to leave. You see, we don't have that fear. You want to challenge the Bible here, I'll give you one, take it home, read it, come back.

We can discuss it. We're not afraid, we're not worried at all because we know. That God can hold his own.

We know the veracity of the word of God, we don't have those kinds of insecurities, we don't have to keep people in the church by threatening them with death if they leave. You see, to me, that's a very insecure religion. Isn't all able to keep people without threatening to kill them if they leave? I mean, you know, come on, but that's the way it is.

But you see, it's this it's this inability to challenge that to me proves the falsity of these different systems. Paul was happy to have them challenge him because he knew that he was secure. He wasn't worried about them searching the scriptures.

You know, for centuries, the Roman Catholic Church kept the Bible out of the hands of the common people. You know why they did that? Very simple reason. They knew if the people read the Bible, they would realize in a heartbeat that the whole system was bankrupt spiritually and contrary to the biblical revelation.

And so they did everything they could to keep the Bible out of the hands of the people. When the Bible was being translated into the common language, the translators became the greatest adversaries of the church. They would hunt them down, torment them, torture them, kill them, anything they could to keep them from translating the Bible to get into the hands of the people because they were afraid that if people got the Bible, that would be the end of their system.

And to some extent, that's what happened back in the Reformation period. Once the Bible got into the hands of the common people, the church lost the death grip it had on Europe. But we're not afraid to take the Bible and to let it speak for itself.

We're not saying anything other than what it says. And so many of them believed and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned.

That the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds, then immediately the brethren sent Paul away to go to the sea. But both Silas and Timothy remained there. But those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

And so once again, success mingled with opposition. And Paul is not able to stay as long as he would have liked to. So they move on and he will travel now to Athens.

And we will pick up in our next study here where we left off. Actually, we'll come back next week and look more specifically at verse 11 and kind of look at just the great example that the Berean set for us and a pattern that we can emulate as we seek the Lord ourselves. Lord, we do pray now as we adjourn this evening that you would, Lord, go with us as we go, fill us, Lord, with your spirit, strengthen us.

Lord, we're going out into a world that is becoming increasingly intolerant of anything that goes against the party line, the politically correct view of things. And yet, Lord, help us not to be intimidated by that. Help us not to be afraid.

Help us not to hold back our witness for fear of losing a job or for fear of someone saying something about us or anything like that. But help us, Lord, to be bold and help us to know that you're with us and that you will protect us, that you will be with us, that you will provide for us. Lord, that we can trust in you, Lord, may we follow the example of these great men of faith that we're reading about, may we follow in their footsteps and may we see many like they did in Thessalonica and Berea come out of darkness, turn from idols to the living God and to wait for your son from heaven.

Lord, may we see many turn to you in these days. Use us, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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