



Good morning. I want to personally welcome all our new and almost new guests here today! And for those watching online, you are a vital part of what the Lord is doing here at Bethel and we can't wait to see you soon. Today, we will let the living Word of Christ change our lives.

Have you ever taken a moment and pondered how churches choose their names? Some churches often emphasize coolness: fuel, harbor, the grove, rise church. Some simply take the geographical description of the community: First Atlanta, Asheville UM, Capitol Hill Baptist or Birmingham community church. However, if your community is obscurely located or named, then your church ends up with this title: Flippin Church of God, Boring UM Church, Half-way Baptist, or Little Hope Baptist. Some choose to adopt biblical names of faithful examples: Bethel (house of God), Ephesians church, or the Berean Church.

Today we continue our series in the Book of Acts, and look at a people who are commended in the way they respond to the Gospel. May we "Walk Like a Berean."

Walk Like a Berean- Read Acts 17:10-15

As soon as it was night, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. To this point, Paul traveled from town to town sharing the beautiful story of the risen Messiah from Nazareth. He trekked from the east on the Egnatian Way, a major thoroughfare beginning in Istanbul through Bulgaria and terminating at the Adriatic Sea, a small jump from Rome. On this road, he would have met Jews fleeing Italy telling how Emperor Claudius had expelled them from the capital. In the course of only one verse, the Apostle veers of the normal path to Berea, a town 55 miles away and described by Cicero as an "out of the way town." By foot, this one verse would have taken three days. And in this out of the way town we encounter a peculiar people, the Bereans.

Walk with Nobility (17:11) Paul, using his normal missionary pattern began to expound upon the glories of Calvary at the local synagogue. When you first hear the word noble what comes to your mind? For many, you are thinking of the 10 lords a leaping and nine ladies dancing. This is the only time in Acts this word is used to describe a person and designates a person who is willing to learn and evaluate something fairly. Today we might call these people open-minded. Luke means that they had no prejudice to prevent them from giving Paul a fair hearing.

God commends his people to walk with open-mindedness. If honest, we who call ourselves Christians can be the most close minded people in the world. Not because we are seeking King Jesus, but because we are lazy or prejudiced. How can we afford to be open minded? Because

we have the truth. Nothing can stand against the truth. Oh that the Lord would raise up generation of nobility, who would engage a hungry world for the Gospel with an open mind and a close hand around the Bible! What is the opposite of open-mindedness? Prejudice and judgmental attitudes, which has no place in the Kingdom of Yahweh.

The close minded person says, "We have did it that way before, or this is the way we have always done things. I don't have time to listen and tradition says.... The open-minded person says, "God I want to learn what you teach and I want to receive what you give."

The Bereans came down from their high pedestals and positions of heritage and like hungry children in need of food sought God's word. **Will you walk with an open mind and noble character?**

Walk with Readiness (17:11) The noble character of the Bereans had immediate consequences. First they received word with eagerness. They walked with readiness! What would it look like if we lived with an eager expectancy that God would speak into our lives every day? The Bereans responded enthusiastically because they realized the relevance of the gospel in their lives.

Robby Robins was an Air Force pilot during the first Iraq war. After his 300th mission, he was surprised to be given permission to immediately pull his crew together and fly his plane home. They flew across the ocean to Massachusetts and then had a long drive to western Pennsylvania. They drove all night, and when his buddies dropped him off at his driveway just after sun-up, there was a big banner across the garage—"Welcome Home Dad!"

How did they know? No one had called, and the crew themselves hadn't expected to leave so quickly. Robins relates, "When I walked into the house, the kids, about half dressed for school, screamed, 'Daddy!' Susan came running down the hall—she looked terrific—hair fixed, make-up on, and a crisp yellow dress. 'How did you know?' I asked.

'I didn't,' she answered through tears of joy. 'Once we knew the war was over, we knew you'd be home one of these days. **We knew you'd try to surprise us, so we were ready every day.**' What if this was my attitude toward the Father? I know you want to work, speak, and transform my life so I want to be ready every day. I want to be ready today. **Oh Lord, help us walk with readiness!**

Walk with Circumspection (17:11) Not only were the people of Berea noble, not only did they receive the gospel with readiness, they also examined the words of Paul compared it to the ultimate source of truth, the Bible. This expression is graphic, and refers to a legal process, such as a trial. Being open minded does not signify that you are gullible or unthinking. Faith does not ask you to "check your mind at the door" but rather engage your mind on the truth of Jesus Christ.

We must walk with circumspection. We must think critically and compare everything through the lens of Jesus Christ and His Word.

In 2013 It didn't feel right to an off-duty Chicago police officer when he was pulled over by an unmarked SUV with flashing lights. As it turns out, it wasn't. The men who got out of the car weren't wearing weapons, radios, or other police-issue gear. They came up to the driver's window, and were surprised to be greeted by another officer. The real officer (the guy who got pulled over), who was still wearing his bullet resistant vest and a police shirt, asked the phony officer, "Who are you?" The phony guy replied: "I'm Chicago police," but the officer sensed they were bluffing and said, "Oh, really?" The imposter, apparently feeling something was up jumped back into the SUV which sped away with the two men inside. There's something about encountering the "real deal" that makes phonies, counterfeits, and fakes shy away.

Do you know the Way, the Truth, and the Life? We are to know the Word so much that we can spot a false idol from a mile away. We are to know the Word so that we can see a temptation coming. We are to know so that we can see spiritual warfare, run to the Father, and watch the enemy run away! **Walk with circumspection.**

Walk with Confidence When the people of Berea listened to the word and then began to look at the word, something beautiful happened. Many of them believed. To believe something means that you find it trustworthy. Can you trust Jesus Christ? Do you trust his plan for your life? Do you trust that his atoning death is all that you need for eternal life? If so, why do we live in a way that says I trust my plans, my strength, my morality, my authority? Oh that we could live with the confidence that Jesus is enough!

My Response

The Bereans would have been surprised could they have foreseen how many Christian groups of later days would call themselves "Bereans" after their noble example of biblical study.

Humble receptivity lies at the heart of faith and true belief.

Notes

Acts 17:10 As soon as it was night, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. Upon arrival, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Paul was traveling on the Egnatian way. A road that runs east/west through from Istanbul through Bulgaria and ends at the Adriatic sea, a small jump to Italy. On this road he would have met Jews from Rome traveling eastward telling how the Emperor Claudius had expelled them from the capital (Bruce, 326).

Beroea is described by Cicero as an “out of the way town.” Meaning it lay off the Egnatian Way.

In the course of one verse Paul travels fifty miles. By foot this journey would have taken about three days (NAC, 363).

11 The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

These Berean Jews would have been surprised could they have foreseen how many Christian groups of later days would call themselves “Beroeans” after their noble example of Bible study (Bruce, 326).

Noble

A willingness to learn and evaluate something fairly, to be open-minded, to be noble minded. Luke means that the Berean Jews allowed no prejudice to prevent them from giving Paul a fair hearing (Peterson, 484).

They came down from their pedestals as people of high standing or as people of high Jewish heritage and, like hungry children in need of food, they sought God’s Word (NIV, 469).

The character trait that Jesus recommends here is an attitude of repentance—of need, of admission that one possesses no merit. Such people are open to learn from God what he wishes to teach and receive from God what he wishes to give (NIV, 469).

Eagerness

Eagerness or readiness

Is the only place such a description appears in Acts (ECNT, 556).

Their noble character was demonstrated in two ways. First, they responded enthusiastically because they realized its relevance to their own lives (Peterson, 484).

Examined

This expression is graphic, for it refers to a legal process, such as a trial (ECNT, 556). They were not gullible or unthinking in their approach (Peterson, 484).

They did not except the his word uncritically but did their own examination of the Scriptures to see if they really did point to the death and resurrection of the Messiah as Paul claimed (NAC, 363).

Bible study that pleases God is an expression of faith. It is an attitude that says, "I am needy." (NIV, 469).

To Timothy, a young man who journeyed with Paul in Berea:

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, **17** so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim. 3:16

12 Consequently, many of them **believed**, including a number of the prominent Greek women as well as men.

Believed

To believe something to be true; trustworthy

Here again, as in Thessalonica, the emphasis is placed on the intellectual component of conversion (BW3, 509).

Humble receptivity lies at the heart of faith and true belief (NIV, 459).

13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul at Berea, they came there too, agitating and upsetting the crowds.

14 Then the brothers and sisters immediately sent Paul away to go to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed on there. 15 Those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving instructions for Silas and Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible, they departed.

Illustrations

Application

Does Luke's attribution of nobility to the Bereans mean that they were more deserving of salvation than other people? Did they have an inherent qualification that caused them to merit salvation (NIV, 469)?