

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XLII. Heeding The Example Of The Bereans

(Acts 17:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," *Bible Know. Com., N. T.*, p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 17:1-12 records how Paul and Silas evangelized Thessalonica before being opposed and sent by fellow believers to Berea, and in Berea how Paul and Silas met people who were more noble than those in Thessalonica for how they handled the message from Paul. We view the passage for our application:

II. Heeding The Example Of The Bereans, Acts 17:1-12.

- A. Paul and Silas were well-received by some of the people in their ministry at Thessalonica, Acts 17:1-4:
 - 1. When they came to Thessalonica, Paul and Silas entered the synagogue as was their custom and for three Sabbaths they reasoned with them from the Hebrew Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah needed to suffer and rise from the dead, and they claimed that Jesus was the Messiah, Acts 17:1-3 ESV.
 - 2. Some of the Hebrews were persuaded to believe in Christ, and they joined Paul and Silas along with a large number of the devout Greeks and a number of the leading women of the city, Acts 17:4 ESV.
- B. However, unbelieving Hebrews became jealous of the large following of Paul and Silas so they persecuted them and their converts to where the believers sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, Acts 17:5-10a:
 - 1. Unbelieving Hebrews became jealous of the large following of Paul and Silas, so they reacted to their ministry by stirring up worthless men to form a mob that stirred up the whole city, and they attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring Paul and Silas out from that house to the crowd, Acts 17:5.
 - 2. Not finding Paul and Silas there, the mob dragged Jason and some of the believers before the city rulers, charging them with countering Caesar's decrees by teaching allegiance to another king, Jesus, Acts 17:6-7.
 - 3. This charge disturbed the city rulers who were under the Roman Emperor's rule, so they took money as a security from Jason and the other believers they had captured before they released them, Acts 17:8-9.
 - 4. The believers realized that they needed to get Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica, so they immediately sent them away by night to another town of Berea, Acts 17:10a.
- C. Paul and Silas then ministered Christ's Gospel in the synagogue at Berea, and the response of the Hebrews there set a timeless example in Church History on handling "new" messages that we hear, Acts 17:10b-12:
 - 1. Upon ministering the Gospel of Christ in the synagogue at Berea, the response of the Hebrews there was better than that of the believers in Thessalonica, a response that was more *eugenes*, "noble-minded, high-minded" (Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 319), Acts 17:10b-11a.
 - 2. Specifically, these Hebrews at Berea had an excellent Biblical "epistemology," an excellent basis for what comprised the truth, and they utilized it in examining the message by Paul and Silas, Acts 17:11b,c,d:
 - a. Those who heard Paul and Silas received the message with all *prothumia*, "readiness, willingness" (Ibid., p. 713), meaning they were willing to consider its content as possibly being from God, Acts 17:11b.
 - b. Those who heard Paul and Silas then "examined" (*anakrino*, Ibid., p. 56) the Scriptures to see whether the statements that Paul and Silas had made were true, Acts 17:11d. This action showed that these Hebrews held to the full divine inspiration, infallibility, inerrancy and ultimate authority of the Old Testament!
 - c. Those who heard Paul and Silas also examined the Scriptures *kath' hemeran*, literally "according [to a] day," where the preposition *kata* is used distributively to mean "daily," Ibid., p. 406-409, v. 11c. This examination thus involved far more than a brief Scriptural test of a few statements by Paul and Silas, but **days of thorough examination** of their message in light of what the Old Testament Scriptures taught!
 - 3. "So then" (the particles *men oun* indicating a continuation and meaning "so, then," Ibid., p. 504), many of these Berean Hebrews believed, including many honorable Greek women and men, Acts 17:12.

Lesson: *Though some Hebrews and many devout Greeks and Greek women believed the Gospel at Thessalonica, the Berean Hebrews were more noble in that they (1) received the Gospel with full readiness to consider it as true, (2) they examined the Gospel in light of the Scriptures they held to be fully divinely inspired, infallible, inerrant and authoritative for faith and practice, (3) assessing it daily in a full inspection of the message before believing it.*

Application: *May we follow in the footsteps of the Bereans in how we respond to spiritual messages given to us.*