

Acts 17:10-15

A Heart for the Word

¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. ¹² Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵ So 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.

We are continuing to follow Paul and Silas on what is Paul's 2nd missionary journey

A) Now so far in Paul's missionary Journeys we have seen Him - beaten a few times - stoned ...dead

B) Arrested and put in prison/ ran out of several towns

C) On this 2nd trip seen him beaten and imprisoned in Philippi;
1) he had left Thessalonica Under the cover of night in peril of his life,

D) Most men would have abandoned this calling a long time ago - after all of that!

E) The idea of quitting never occurred to Paul
He just keeps going –

1) And God kept working - touching/ transforming lives in every city he went to.

QUOTE: When David Livingstone was asked where he was prepared to go, he answered, "I am prepared to go anywhere, so long as it is forward."

A) Paul seemed to have that same mentality- He keeps going from city to city sharing JESUS

B) God gives PAUL a great blessing in the city of Berea – 50 miles west of Thessalonica

1) A Bright spot in the darkness -

C) This Church becomes an example to the rest of us on how to approach God's word.

As was Paul's custom – he went in to the synagogue of the Jews – blessed by what He discovers

11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

The first thing we are told about these people is they were more fair-minded. – Noble minded.

A) Another translation puts it this way: They were of a Beautiful mind.

B) The world can tend to look down on Christians who believe in the Bible

1) Narrow minded - simple minded - not intellectual enough - down right stupid

C) The world looks down on a person who actively embraces the scriptures

D) BUT that is not the perspective of heaven

1) the Bible says – You are of a Beautiful mind! – Noble in God's sight

In God's sight the Bereans were of a Beautiful mind –because of their approach to God' word.

A) Note a few things: #1 They received the WORD with a readiness = Eagerness –

B) a rushing forward – can't wait to get into it.

C) That was how they approached the study of the Scriptures

#2 And They Searched the Scriptures daily!

A) Search = to Examine, to scrutinize, to investigate

B) It is a word used in forensic science – like CSI – turning over every leaf and every rock.

C) They tested the things of Paul. - He is showing them how the OT scriptures - messiah suffer

D) They would go home and study further - which only bolstered their faith in JESUS

1) Paul was thrilled that this was their Practice.

My hope for my preaching is that it would create within you a hunger to go home and study it further

A) Berean Church stands out to Believers thru/out history as great example of students of the word.

B) The church in Berea reminds me on an individual in the OT

1) who is also a great example of how to approach the word of God.

C) His name is Ezra - Ezra was a scribe who was during the time of Nehemiah

D) Ezra was instrumental in helping Israel get back on track spiritually in Jerusalem

1) after their 70yrs of exile in Babylon.

E) God used him along with Nehemiah to bring about a spiritual revival in Israel.

Ezra 7:9 gives this description of Ezra – “the good hand of his God was upon him.”

A) That means that God blessed him gave him strength / direction / and protection.

B) Now I think we can trace that blessing of God upon his life to what we read in Ezra 7:10 –

C) This describes what Ezra was all about!

V.10 Tells us why: “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

Ezra 7:10

D) Like the Bereans Ezra had a heart for the word of God.

1) God blessed him because of it

Don't misunderstand me - God's love for you is not affected by whether you read the Bible or not.

A) His Love is constant – But reading the Bible is important to your spiritual health

B) Laws in Nature - Gravity - right

1) Also spiritual laws

C) The Law of sowing and reaping - Sow to the flesh - reap corruption

1) Sow to the Spirit - ABUNDANT LIFE

Our approach to God's Word and study of God's word is connected to sowing to the Spirit

A) Consider this promise God gave to Joshua

Joshua 1:8

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

B) That was God's promise to Joshua and that is God's promise to us.

C) Stay in the Word - Meditate on the Word - you are going to prosper spiritually - good success

D) The Problem with a lot of Christians – is they just don't read the word. – Lazy

E) Counseling - Do you have a consistent Devotional life - 90% of the time people are struggling

1) The Answer is no

Unfortunately A lot of us approach the Bible like MEN view – instruction manuals – Emergency only

A) You get a new Gadget - But instead of reading the manual - you think – “I can figure this out on my own.”

B) You start hooking things together - pushing button

C) You only pick up the instruction manual when you get stuck - or it doesn't work. -HANDS

D) My wife reads the instruction manual first thing every time. -HANDS

1) What does that say about us

Most instruction manuals have warnings too.

A) Stop don't do this great harm !!

B) Some warning labels make sense – but some are really weird –

1) which means someone out there somewhere did something – hurt sued – won – thus warning label

C) Examples of some weird warning labels

Warning on an electric router made for carpenters: *This product not intended for use as a dental drill.*

A) That means some guy somewhere said – I got this sore tooth – or his wife had a sore tooth –

B) he didn't want to pay for the dentist – **come here babe – I will fix it -**

Warning on a cartridge for a laser printer: Do not eat toner.

A) Some computer geek – hungry – toner color

Microwave warning – “Do not use for drying pets.”

A) **Urban legend – Poodle** - well some guy tried it – Come here fluffy – did not turn out well.

B) A warning label found on a baby stroller cautions the user to **“Remove child before folding”- Really?**

C) A prescription of sleeping pills stating, **“Warning: May cause drowsiness”**

1) Uh yea I was hoping for that

D) A household iron warns users: **“Never iron clothes while they are being worn”**

1) Someone out there - great idea - don't have time to get dressed again

Children's cough medicine bottle – Do not drive a car or operate machinery after taking this.

A) I was really hoping my **5yr old could run the Fork Lift today**

B) A child size Super man costume – **“Warning wearing this costume does not enable you to fly.”**

C) Some kid out there - put on the suit - jumped off the roof and broke his leg

Those are some weird warnings

A) The Bible also has warning and admonitions – **but they are not weird**

28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

A) Many warnings in the Bible - **Pride - Bitterness greed - sexual immorality**

B) Here is one relevant to our culture -

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes.
Isaiah 5:20-21

C) God gives us such warnings because he is a loving heavenly father who wants what is best for us –

1) He **wants his kids to Prosper** and have good success

D) But the heart of the Word is not just about Warnings or instruction/

1) really – **It is to know God.**

Ezra believed that – affected his approach to the Word -

“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Ezra 7:10

A) He prepared his heart in 3 ways concerning the Word of God!

B) Preparation is a normal part of life!

B) Prepare for work - Prepare for dates - prepare for retirement

C) Most of you prepared to come here today – got out of bed – clothes – shower – hair – make up.

1) **GRATEFUL -**

But did you prepare your HEART to come to Church today?

A) Notice what it says about Ezra - **Ezra prepared his heart to SEEK the Law of the LORD**

B) Law of is an idiom for the whole Word

C) What does it mean to prepare your heart to seek the Word?

For me that often translates into finding a quiet place, where I can quiet my heart

A) To have a quiet time with Jesus.

B) My world is often so distracting and busy - I wake up to a slew of emails and text

C)Best thing for me is to not look at those first thing -1) so I need to put away the cell phone, turn off all the others distractions to prepare my heart to sit with Jesus.

D)Tea - Bible - Office - looking out my window - Me and Jesus and my Journal

E)Journal is not a Diary - Leather

Why Journal?

A)Expectation - Write something down

B)Meditate: God told Joshua - Mediate day and night

C)Promise of Pasm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.

Meditate – Cow chews the cud – slow

A cow has four compartments in its stomach -

A)They chew and swallow and the food will pass through these different compartments

B)But some of the food called the cud is coughed up later in the day and rechewed -

C)Slow and methodical - unlike my dog - as quick as possible - scarfs it down

1)Ok what is next - let's play

A Cow spends 8 hrs a day chewing the cud - slow and methodical

A)Swallow and bring it up again and again and again

B)That is what meditation looks like - bringing the word up in your heart and mind over and over again.

1)Read it and contemplate it over and over throughout the day.

C)The Result

3 He shall be like a tree

Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;

And whatever he does shall prosper.

D)Ezra prepared his heart to seek the Lord in the Word - that is first - His approach

#2 Ezra prepared his heart to SEEK the Law of the LORD, and TO DO IT - His ACTIVITY

A)Not only did Ezra prepare his heart to seek the Lord,

B)But part of that preparation involved preparing his heart to do whatever the Lord SPOKE to him.

1)In other words Ezra approached the word of God from the standpoint of not just gaining information,

D)But from the standpoint of Applying the information to his life.

1)That is always the most effective approach for studying the God's word .

In fact I think that sometimes the Lord is reluctant to give us NEW Instruction

A)Because we haven't responded to His past instruction.

B)Devotions are dry - the Lord isn't speaking to me right now?

1)When is the last time he spoke to you? - Did you do that?

God's promise to Joshua: "if you observe to do according to all that is written in it, then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Joshua 1:8

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." James 1:22 NCV

23 Those who hear God's teaching and do nothing are like people who look at themselves in a mirror. 24 They see their faces and then go away and quickly forget what they looked like. James 1:23-25 NCV

James uses the illustration of a man who looks at his natural face in the mirror, rushes out the door, and forgets what he saw.

A)Mirror today: Help – Shave – Extreme makeover

B)James describes a guy– who gets up looks in the mirror – need to shave / wash face –

1)Trim nose and ear hair

C)Change my clothes get out of my PJ's –

1)Leaves the house without doing any of that

D)Looks like a wreck – ventures out

E)The mirror showed him what needed to be taken care of – but He didn't do it

1)Goes out oblivious to what he looks like

The word of God is like a mirror that reveals to us the very thoughts and intentions of our hearts (

A)Shows what we look like in comparison to Jesus

B)Exposes our selfishness / pride/.

1)It confronts our contempt for others and our lack of compassion.

C)Reveals greed / bitterness / lust –

1)Not a pretty Picture:

Now when James says that the man forgets what he looks like -

A)I think that James is not describing a man with a poor memory, but rather a man with poor priorities.

B)He doesn't remember what he saw in the mirror because he doesn't regard it as very important.

C)The things of God – the heart of God are not His first priority.

1)Work – money to make / Hobbies – things to play

D)But note the contrast

25 But the truly happy people are those who carefully study God's perfect law that makes people free, and they continue to study it. They do not forget what they heard, but they obey what God's teaching says. Those who do this will be made happy. James 1: 25 NCV

E)That was Ezra - that was the Bereans -

1)So Ezra prepared his heart to **respond** to God's instruction. TO DO IT

#3 Ezra prepared his heart to SEEK the Law of the LORD, and TO DO IT, and to TEACH statutes and ordinances in Israel.

A)After receiving from the Lord – his desire was to **teach others.**

B)That really is one of the key ways to grow is to give it away.

C)You take what the Lord has spoken to you and taught you and teach it to your kids

1)or share it with your spouse or a co worker

D)you will be a man or woman growing mightily in the Word and in the Lord.

E)AND your appetite for God's word will Grow!

F)BLESSED AND A BLESSING TO OTHERS

Follow the example of Ezra - Joshua - the Bereans Learn to prepare your heart –

A)To Seek the Lord in his word

B)To take what he is showing you in the word and **APPLY** it to your life

C)And then teach it to others – **You will prosper and have good success.**

Wrap this up by noticing what Happened in Berea The effect of God's word.

V.12 Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

Little words are important when you are studying the Bible and one of the most important is the word Therefore – it is hinging two thoughts together.

A)The response to their approach to the word that was preached was that many believed.

B)Believed = to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in

C)Rest your weight fully upon something

D)So many believed and continued on in Christ!

Where God's word is working Satan always seeks to oppose.

V.13 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.

A)Satan hates the simple preaching of the Word of God!

B)THAT is why he unleashes FURIOUS attacks against those INDIVIDUALS and MINISTRIES that are DEDICATED to the preaching of the Word

C)Your life – he will seek to hinder you – Press on Dig in -

14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 So 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.

D)Out of a desire to see the Word continue on and be effective in another city they sent Paul away.

Perhaps you are hear today and you haven't trusted Christ – The gospel is really a simple thing

A)For God so loved you – that He gave his only son – Jesus was send to die on the cross for your sins

B)3 days later He rose - He lives

C)Whosoever Believes – will have everlasting life Quality of life – forgiveness – cleansed from guilt

D)Learn to get into the Word and grow in your relationship with God

E)Everything in life starts making sense - through that lens