

DEVOTIONS FOR ACTS 17-21

BE A BEREAN

Monday, May 29

Reading: Acts 17

Acts 17:10 *As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. 12 Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.*

How many times have you heard someone say things like “God helps those who help themselves” and “Cleanliness is next to godliness” and attribute the quote to the Bible? Actually, neither one of these statements are found in the Bible! “God helps those who help themselves” was first stated in Aesop’s Fables written about 600 years before Christ. It was popularized in America by Ben Franklin in his Poor Richard’s Almanac (1757). “Cleanliness is next to godliness” comes from ancient Babylonian and Jewish proverbs (not the Proverbs in the Bible). It probably came into the English language from a quotation by John Wesley in one of his sermons (1791). These are but a few of the many things people believe are in the Bible but actually aren’t!

In Acts 17, Paul meets a group of people who would not be fooled in this way. His first foray into Europe has been pretty rough. Despite the clear call of God to go, he has been beaten and imprisoned in Philippi and had to hide from an angry mob in Thessalonica. However, along the way people have been saved and churches have been started. Now he arrives in Berea. His ministry to the synagogues in the other cities had mixed results. Here, however, the Bereans are eager to hear the gospel.

Not only were they eager to hear, they examined the Scriptures for themselves. The word means “to sift up and down.” They “sifted” Paul’s words through the sieve of God’s Word to be sure it was true! The problem came when Jews from Thessalonica showed up and the Berean believers had to sneak Paul out of town.

It would be great if Christians today were like those Bereans! Too often Christians just take the preacher’s word for it - whether they hear him in the church or on TV. They don’t take the time to discover if what they were taught is actually the Word of God. This can be dangerous as there are a lot of “preachers” out there who are in ministry for themselves and not the Lord. They tell people what they want to hear so they can increase their fame and fortune. We must be on our guard against “wolves in sheep’s clothing” (Matthew 7:15-23; Acts 20:29-31).

Are you eager to study God’s Word for yourself? Or do you let someone else tell you what to believe? Godly pastors and teachers are important, but nothing beats studying the Bible for yourself and letting the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. Even the best intentioned preacher can sometimes (though probably unintentionally) get it wrong! Be a Berean Christian! Let God’s Word be an everyday destination. Let the Bible saturate your thoughts and actions.

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.