

ACTS
Ideal Evangelism
Acts 17: 1-15

If you had a choice of becoming like any evangelist who has ever lived, who would you like to be? Would it be Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, George Whitefield, John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, D. L. Moody or Billy Graham? These were or are all famous men but the most brilliant and talented evangelist of all time was the Apostle Paul. If you must pattern yourself after some evangelist, let it be Paul, for he was the ideal evangelist.

If you were the ideal evangelist and you had a choice as to the ideal audience to which you would like to preach, what audience would that be? Would it be the audience Polycarp preached before in the Roman Coliseum just before he was burned at the stake? Would it be Luther preaching before the Diet of Worms, indicating that he would not recant? Would the audience be the Indians to whom David Brainard preached as he coughed up blood on the white snow? Perhaps the ideal audience would be the thousands of people George Whitefield preached to in the Boston Common during the Great Awakening? Would the congregation of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, over which Spurgeon was pastor, be the ideal congregation? Would the ideal congregation or audience be the filled-to-capacity Los Angeles coliseum where Billy Graham preached? These would all be exciting audiences but perhaps the most ideal audience to ever receive the gospel was the Bereans. In Berea, the Apostle Paul had an ideal situation in which to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

IDEAL EVANGELIST - Acts 17:1-9

His Method (17:1, 2)

“Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, . . .” -- Paul and his band of missionaries, consisting of Silas, Luke and Timothy, left Philippi during the second missionary journey, moving over the famous Roman road called the Egnatian Way which crossed Macedonia and connected the Adriatic Sea with the Black Sea. Amphipolis and Apollonia were cities along the Egnatian Way. The Egnatian Way would be comparable to our modern day freeway system from coast to coast. It was the main road to carry the great Roman armies and commerce. The Romans built this road for military, political and commercial purposes, but God, in His providence, had them build this road to carry his gospel heralds swiftly allover the Roman Empire. The distance from Philippi to Amphipolis was 33 miles; Amphipolis to Apollonia was 30 miles, and Apollonia to Thessalonica was 37 miles. It was about a three day journey from Philippi to Thessalonica, and they stayed overnight in each city.

“They came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.” -- The missionaries had specifically chosen Thessalonica as the city to do concentrated evangelism. The original name of Thessalonica was Therma, but in 315 B.C. the Macedonian king, Cassander (a trusted general of Alexander the Great before his death), enlarged the city and strengthened it, and then named it after his wife Thessalonica, who was the daughter of Philip II and step-sister of Alexander the Great. Thessalonica was the capital of the province of Macedonia with a population estimated at 200,000. It was an important commercial city and it had a free government not under Roman control.

Paul passed by Amphipolis and Apollonia which were important cities. Why? Paul had a definite strategy in his evangelism. He evangelized key cities which had a Jewish synagogue. The Greek literally says, “Where there was the synagogue of the Jews.” Apparently, Amphipolis and Apollonia had no Jewish synagogues. Paul always stuck with his game plan in evangelism; it was never a hit or miss situation. Apparently, Paul and his missionaries were not running frantically through the streets of Amphipolis and Apollonia trying to lead men to Christ since they only had a few hours in these cities. The text seems to imply that they did no evangelism in either city. Apparently, the Holy Spirit had directed them not to evangelize these cities. Why? Because it was

the plan of God that the Thessalonians who were won to Christ by Paul would witness to those in Amphipolis and Apollonia.

“For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything” (I Thess.1:8).

“And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.” -- Paul's missionary strategy was to minister to Jews in the synagogue first where there would also be Jewish proselytes and God-fearing Gentile seekers (called proselytes at the gate) who had not yet embraced Judaism. Paul knew the scriptural command concerning the Jew. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Paul also had a great burden to see his Jewish kinsmen won to Christ.

“Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation” (Rom. 10:1).

“For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:3).

Paul spent three Sabbaths preaching to the Jews. This has caused some scholars to believe that Paul was in Thessalonica only three weeks and then left. He may have been in the city more than three weeks, but he was limited to three weeks ministry within the synagogue itself. Most scholars, however, feel that Paul was not in Thessalonica for more than six weeks. This is significant since the Epistles of First and Second Thessalonians were the first inspired letters written by Paul around A.D. 51 or 52. In these letters, we see how Paul taught these young believers doctrine and he assumed they understood what he was saying. He wrote them about election, the death of Christ, the call to salvation, the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, the wrath of God, the kingdom, judgment on unbelievers, apostasy, the man of sin, the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of believers. The church at Thessalonica was a well-taught local church and grounded in sound doctrine.

Some might say, “What did Paul do the rest of the week when he wasn't preaching on Saturday in the synagogue?” He made tents to earn a living.

“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example; because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example” (II Thess. 3:7-9)

He was also building up the Christians.

“But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. For you recall, brethren our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (I Thess. 2:7-12).

Paul was an industrious servant of Christ. In a few short weeks he evangelized much of the city, established a local church and carried on an effective follow-up program. Paul worked hard at his ministry and so should every other man who claims to be a true minister of Jesus Christ. The ministry is not a job or a profession. It is a calling and way of life.

When Paul went into the synagogue he “reasoned with them from the Scriptures.” Paul used the Old Testament Scriptures as the basis for all his reasoning with the Jews. Every address he made in the synagogue was from the Word of God. Paul did not depend upon human reasoning or sentimental emotionalism to win his hearers but on

the Bible alone. Paul did not throw out the intellect but he reasoned from the Scriptures, showing the logic and consistency of the Christian position over against Judaism and the pagan Greek and Roman philosophies and the mystery cults of that day. Paul appealed to the heart and the conscience through the mind. He knew people had to have right information before they could make an intelligent commitment to Christ.

His Message (17:3)

“Explaining . . .” -- The first thing Paul did was to explain (“open” - KJV) the Old Testament passages on the Messiah. Paul unfolded or expounded to these unbelieving Jews the truth concerning a suffering and resurrected Messiah from the Old Testament. He gave a verse by verse explanation of the key texts on the Messiah. Paul took no other books but the Bible, for he believed in the inspired Bible and so did the Jews, and they would recognize no other authority.

Today we need more preachers who will expound the Scriptures verse by verse to people so they can understand the meaning of the text and get a grounding for some kind of biblical and systematic theology. There is not one pulpit in a hundred in America which seeks to teach books of the Bible in a verse by verse method.

About five years ago I was called by the Irving Bible Church in Irving, Texas (just outside of Dallas, near Texas Stadium) to candidate for that pulpit. They would have paid me over \$4,000.00 more than I was being paid at Grace Church, and there were over 500 people in that congregation. It was very tempting. I prayed about it. God definitely spoke to me the fact that He had called me to Grace Church and my work was not finished here. He also spoke to me about the fact that at that time there was no church in the Valley with an expository, verse by verse ministry of the Word, and Dallas had all kinds of these preachers and teachers. I phoned them back and said, “No, thank you.” They thought I was a little crazy but I had peace.

“. . . And giving evidence . . .” -- In the Greek this literally means “placing before” or “to sit down by the side of.” What Paul did was expound the Old Testament texts and then showed from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that He was the fulfiller of all these predicted prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Paul undoubtedly turned to Psalm 22, written one thousand years before Christ, which so accurately portrays His death by crucifixion.

“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? . . . Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And Thou dost lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots” (Psa. 22:1, 11-18).

The amazing thing about this prophecy is that death by crucifixion was not known in King David's day. It was a Roman innovation and yet it was accurately described a thousand years before Christ. Paul probably turned to Isaiah 53, written 750 years before Christ, to show that the Messiah was to suffer in order to die for the sins of His people.

“Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him” (Isa. 53:4-6).

Paul surely quoted Psalm 16 to show that the Messiah would be resurrected from the dead. “For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see the pit” (Psa. 16:10).

“. . . That the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, . . .” -- These Jews had made up a preconceived theology concerning the Messiah. They saw Him as a mighty King, a triumphant victor over all religious and political foes, namely the Roman Empire. Yet the Jews had no place for a suffering Messiah. The verses in the Old Testament which spoke of Messiah reigning were exalted and the verses which spoke of His suffering were ignored or explained away. A suffering, crucified Messiah was a great offense to the Jews because they refused to be honest with the Scriptures about Messiah. Therefore, they had a theology which would not let them come to the truth.

Many Christians today have enslaved themselves to dynamic, persuasive men and/or dogmatic theological systems which will not let them come to the truth. They are slaves to men and systems and are no better off than these blinded Jews.

“. . . And saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.’” -- These Jews would listen intently as long as the apostles spoke of a man who suffered and was raised from the dead. The coup de grace came when Paul said that this Christ was Messiah, for they had no place in their theology for a suffering Messiah. Furthermore, if He was the Messiah, they had put Him to death, and it would take real humility to admit they were wrong.

Today, in so-called Christian circles, if a preacher speaks on general subjects such as “Jesus, the Teacher,” or “Jesus, the One Who Suffered at the Cross as an Example,” or even, “Jesus, the One Whose Disciples Claimed He Was Raised from the Dead,” there is not too much static. Yet, preach “Christ Died for Sinners Who Are Headed for Eternal Judgment, and Men Will Go to Hell Without this Christ,” then there is immediate objection. Still further, preach on “God’s Electing Love and Christ’s Death for His People Only, and the Holy Spirit’s Right to Draw Whom He Pleases,” and even many Christians get up in arms.

Paul was the ideal evangelist because he used the Bible as his only authority and instructed people in the truths of Christianity before asking for a commitment to Christ.

His Many Converts (17:4)

“And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, . . .” -- Some of these hardened, legalistic, prejudiced Jews saw the light and were persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah. They became convinced in the mind and made a commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah to follow Him at all costs. This was not some superficial, emotional decision. They understood that Christ was offering the forgiveness of sin, eternal life and heaven, and that to follow Him would mean rejection by most of their Jewish colleagues. It says, “some” were persuaded, not all. The majority of Jews stayed in their unbelief, for religious people are the hardest to reach for Christ. This is also true even today. The minority believe in Christ, the majority will not.

“. . . Along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks . . .” -- These were Jewish proselytes, or proselytes at the gate, who had grown weary of the pagan Roman and Greek philosophies and religious mystery cults. These folks were polytheists and were attracted to the monotheism of Judaism and the standard of morality in Judaism.

When the gospel was preached to them, they were greatly impressed and they believed in Christ. Neither Greek philosophy or rigid Judaism had done anything for their souls and these searching Greeks were set free and liberated when they came to know Jesus Christ.

“. . . And a number of leading women.” -- The gospel had a real appeal to women, especially women of the upper classes who were prominent citizens in the Greek cities. There is a reason for this magnetic appeal Christ had to women. These were educated women who knew the Greek philosophies and had been in the religious cults. They knew that these man-made philosophies were empty, vain and dead, offering nothing for the inward spirit. These philosophies and mystery cults were totally humanistic, full of voluptuous and degrading sexual practices which left these women devastated and filled with self-loathing. They were disgusted with free sex and they turned to Jesus Christ for forgiveness, who, in turn, gave them a sense of self-worth and value as human

beings.

Paul was the ideal evangelist because he knew how to reach people where they were and to bring them to the Living Christ for new life.

His Maligning Enemies (17: 5-9)

“But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.” -- The Jews were jealous of the success Paul was having among the attenders at the synagogue. They were crying, “Sheep stealers!” Jealousy over another’s education, wealth, personality or social standing is bad, but the most ugly jealousy of all is in the area of religion. These angry Jews went to the marketplace where the loafers, hoods and social misfits and outcasts hung out. The Jews probably paid them to incite a riot in the city against Paul and his missionary band.

The devil never gives up. When he is defeated by Scripture and logic, he turns to violence to stamp out Christianity. These young radicals knew how to manipulate a crowd to irrational actions. The crowd, at a fever pitch and emotional high, went to the home of Jason where Paul was staying.

“And when they did not find them, . . .” -- Paul and the missionaries were gone. God providentially protected them from the lynch mob. Perhaps they had received word of this mob action and went into hiding or perhaps God just had them step out for a moment to miss the action.

“. . . They began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, ‘These men who have upset the world have come here also; . . .’” -- They falsely accused Paul and the missionaries of lawlessness, disorder and disturbing the peace. They claimed that wherever these men went they “upset the world.” It is true that Paul and the missionaries often had trouble in a city because they preached Christ, but they were not lawless. The gospel always causes some to get upset and we must expect it if we are to be true to Jesus Christ. “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33).

In a book entitled, The Cost of Commitment, Dr. John White, a psychiatrist and minister in Canada, said,

It would be foolish of us to assume that our present luxurious freedom will continue indefinitely. (Freedom is the delayed end result of the Reformation, with its biblical view of man. As the biblical influence wanes, it is likely that freedom will not continue.) There are signs that the conditions necessary for tolerance and freedom are already being eroded. Democracy is a fragile flower of late bloom (it was in its present form completely unknown to the Greeks) liable to be withered by scorching winds of impatient hate. It is therefore important that we all ask ourselves: Am I willing to risk imprisonment and death for Christ? Many professing believers are not willing . . . If you are faithful in little things while freedom lasts, chances are that you will be faithful when the big tests come. There is valuable training in faithfulness where you are now. If you are open and honest--true to yourself and true to Christ--your life will provoke hostility in some and will powerfully attract others. To some it will be a "savour of life unto life" and to others "of death unto death." If you are faithful to Him it may make you unpopular and unprosperous . . . I do not wish to be an alarmist about what it costs to be faithful to Christ yet I feel I must point both to Scripture and to the course of church history. I want to awaken the Western Church with the blast of a trumpet, warning her that the normal conditions under which the Church bears witness are not those we now experience, but are conditions inimical to Christian witness. I believe that the darkness may be descending again, and I fear that few of us are prepared for it. We belong to a long tradition of martyrdom, but we have become soft and ill-prepared.

“‘And Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.’ And they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.” -- The Jews then accused Paul of rebellion, sedition and treason. They claimed that Paul was preaching another king than Caesar, and he was. Paul preached Christ, the King of Kings, but His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, not a political

kingdom.

“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm’” (Jn. 18:36).

Paul taught submission to human government. This, however, does tell us that Paul preached Jesus Christ as King, Lord, Master and Ruler, and we should do the same today.

“And when they had received a pledge from Jason, and the others, they released them.” -- Jason either gave his word or gave his money to the authorities with a guarantee that Paul and his band would leave Thessalonica.

Paul was the ideal evangelist because he would not compromise the truth of Jesus Christ and was willing to suffer for his convictions. He understood that the gospel causes a spiritual revolution in all who truly are saved. Children often come up with deep truth without realizing it. A little girl said to her mother, “The Bible begins with Genesis and ends with Revolutions.” Out of the mouth of babes comes truth.

IDEAL AUDIENCE - Acts 17:10-15

Their Exemplary Reputation (17:10, 11a)

“And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, . . .” -- Paul and his cohorts escaped to Berea, but not before the gospel had been preached and a foundation laid for a local church in Thessalonica.

Berea was a city about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica. It was an out-of-the-way city not on the Egnatian Way. This was a beautiful city in the mountains and had many gorgeous gardens, due to the abundance of water in this area. Above all, Berea was a city where the aristocracy lived. It was like a retirement center for wealthy military, political and educational leaders. When Paul arrived in Berea, he went immediately into the synagogue, keeping with his game plan. It says of the attenders of the synagogue in Berea that they were “more noble-minded” than the synagogue attenders in Thessalonica. The Greek literally says “more noble.” This means that the Bereans were of a more noble class than those in Thessalonica; that is, this refers to social nobility. However, it also means that they were more noble in quality of mind and heart. They were more generous, liberal and gracious in their feelings and more ready to inquire candidly into the truth of the doctrine Paul and Silas were advancing. The Bereans were highly educated people and they were open-minded to what Paul had to say. The synagogue attenders in Thessalonica were uncritical in their thinking, prejudiced to the truth, more emotional and impulsive towards the gospel. The Bereans were much more willing to deal objectively with the facts of the gospel as they were proclaimed by Paul.

Their Enthusiastic Response (17: 11 b)

“For they received the word with great eagerness, . . . “ -- This ideal audience listened with rapt attention to what the evangelist Paul had to say concerning Christ and they gave him a respectful hearing. They were eager to receive what Paul had to say because they had an educated mind which generally is more ready to look at all sides of a question.

The Thessalonians also received the word.

“Knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you, for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit” (I Thess. 1 :4-6).

Can one person or group be more noble in the act of receiving the Word and Christ? No, for all must come to

faith in Christ by an act of the will. However, one can be more objective about the truth than another person, and this was the case with the Bereans. They had a super attitude in that they checked everything out with the Scriptures before they made any commitments.

The ideal audience has a receptive mind and heart to the truth and wants to examine it objectively.

Their Eager Research (17: 11c)

“Examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.” -- The Bereans who attended the synagogue examined everything Paul was saying in light of the Old Testament Scriptures. They did not conclude everything false which did not accord with their preconceived opinions nor would they accept any new teaching without carefully checking it out with Scripture. These folks were not pew sitters; they were Bible students. They were cautious and careful about what they believed and they used only the Scriptures as their final authority. If it was in the Book, they would accept it. Both the Thessalonians and the Bereans received the Word of God, but the Bereans were more skeptical and analytical while the Thessalonians were more gullible. These Bereans challenged what the preacher was saying, not to get in a theological argument but to come to the truth. Notice the Bereans did this daily. They were not only earnest but they were diligent in their pursuit of truth. They not only read the Bible devotionally but they studied the Bible theologically. The Bereans were the ideal audience, and would be to God we would have more like them today.

The Bible is our only guide, as Christians, to tell us what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong, what is of God and of Satan. Unless a Christian grounds his faith in the Holy Scriptures, he will be lost in a sea of relativism, where everybody does that which is right in his own eyes, setting each individual up as his own authority. Unless a Christian makes the Bible his only authority for faith and living, he will be misled and manipulated so as to believe that he is his own god. This, of course, is the basis for all humanism today.

We face a great danger in America today among evangelicals. Most evangelicals are gullible, emotional and man-centered. They rarely search the Scriptures. They have believed in Christ but they do not search the Bible for convictions for living and theology. They gather around some teacher and say, “I am of Paul, or Peter or Apollos.” They do not test things they believe and do by the Bible, and their theme song is, “Where he leads us we will follow; what he feeds us we will swallow.” Just because some Bible teacher or evangelist says something, that does not make it right. If a man says, “I have the truth,” or “I know the Greek,” that does not make him an authority. We must study the Bible for ourselves and check all teaching of men with the Bible. We must be willing to change when we are convinced from the Scripture alone. The Reformation brought back to Christians our right as self-sustaining believer-priests to read and interpret the Bible without a priest or a church telling us what Scripture means. It is our God-given right and privilege to study the Scripture daily.

Remember, too, that as long as we are in this body of flesh, we shall never understand the Bible perfectly. There is always room for improvement and refinement in one's understanding and proclaiming of the Word of God.

Dwight Hillis said:

Be our theories of inspiration what they may, this book deals with the deepest things in man's heart and life. Ruskin and Carlyle tell us that they owe more to it, in the way of refinement and culture, than to all the other books, plus all the influence of colleges and universities . . . Read all other books, philosophy, poetry, history, fiction; but if you would refine the judgment, fertilize the reason, wing the imagination, attain unto the finest womanhood or the sturdiest manhood, read this book, reverently and prayerfully, until its truths have dissolved like iron into the blood. . . . The book Daniel Webster placed under his pillow when dying is the book all should carry in the hand while living.

Their Easy Reception (17:12)

“Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.” -- These folks, upon a diligent study of Scripture, became persuaded of the truth and committed to Christ as their personal Lord

and Savior. If men will carefully examine Scripture, they will come to the truth of salvation in Christ Jesus. All the Bereans started out as skeptics but they ended up as true believers and followers of Christ. Once they were intellectually convinced, the bowing of their wills to Christ was a rather easy step.

One of the problems in modern day evangelism is an appeal to the emotions without proper understanding with the mind. Consequently the mind is passed over, and while some kind of a commitment has been made, it was not based on a persuaded mind. This, of course, sets up a terrible conflict between the mind unconvinced and the heart not fully committed to truth. This has left many so-called Christian converts in total derision.

Many infidels have confessed that they had never carefully read the Bible. Thomas Payne, who wrote The Age of Reason, a book that shook Puritan New England for humanism, confessed that he wrote the first part of his book without having a Bible at hand, and without its being possible to procure one where he then was in Paris. He said, "I had neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both; nor could I procure any."

Their Endless Refuters (17:13-15)

"But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the Word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there likewise, agitating and stirring up the crowds. And then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. Now those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed." -- The Jewish legalists hounded Paul wherever he went because they hated his doctrine of Messiah and free grace in salvation and sanctification. These hounds of hell came to Berea, 50 miles from Thessalonica, to stir trouble for Paul. These Jews despised Paul and were after him because he was the leader. Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. Paul left Berea but not before the foundation for a local church was established.

We hear nothing of Berea after this event in the New Testament. Paul may have written a letter to them but it has not been preserved. Why? Perhaps this was such a spiritually healthy church there was no need to write them a letter. We do know this that in Berea today, after 2000 years of corruption, the church Paul planted has now become the persecutor of true Bible-believing Christians. The Greek Orthodox Church, dead in apostasy, is forcing evangelical Christians to almost an underground status.

CONCLUSION

This text of Scripture tells us many Greeks were persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. These Greeks found no salvation in Athena, Zeus, Plato or Aristotle. They found no salvation in the sensuous mystery cults. They were weary of humanism of all types and they turned to Christ for salvation, and they were gloriously liberated. My unsaved friends, there is no salvation in science, philosophy or psychology. There is no salvation in the new morality, free sex, libertinism, existentialism, women's lib or genetic engineering. Salvation is only in Jesus Christ, and only Christ can fill the vacuum in your soul. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

This text also tells us that some Jews turned to Christ. The religious man is always the toughest nut to crack because he thinks he is so good. Yet Christ invaded the lives of some of these Jews and set them free from man-made religion. Christ gave them spiritual liberty to be slaves to the Living Christ.

Are you a believer? Are you persuaded that Christ is the only Savior and that He died for your sins? If you are not, trust Christ, bow to Him as King, submit your mind to Him as Lord. There is no greater intellectual or emotional pursuit than to know Jesus Christ as Lord, Savior and King!