

Next Stop – Berea!

Acts 17:10-15

By Phillip G. Kayser

Intro:

Max Lucado tells the story of Chippie the Parakeet. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage, and the next second he was sucked in, washed up and blown over. The problems began when Chippie's owner decided to clean Chippie's cage with a vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang, and when she turned to pick it up, the hose went up and "shhwoop?" the bird got sucked into the vacuum cleaner. Horrified, she quickly put down the phone, opened the vacuum cleaner and cut open the paper bag. Chippie was still alive, but was pretty bedraggled and covered with dust. She rushed him to the bathroom and held Chippie under the running water to get the dust off. Any intelligent pet owner would do that, right? Then, realizing that he was soaked and shivering, she got out a hair dryer (as any lover of pets would do) and proceeded to blast hot air all over him. The owner said that Chippie was all right, but that he doesn't sing anymore. He just sits and stares. It's not hard to see why – he was sucked in, washed up and blown over.

And that is a parable of what has happened to many people. But we don't have to respond like Chippie when bad things happen to us. We are filled with God's Spirit, endowed with His power and have been promised that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. And yet many people act like Chippie when their feelings have been hurt, or they have had a financial loss or in other ways have been sucked in, washed up and blown over.

I. The Messengers of Truth

A. Paul

1. They didn't quit (vv.10,14)

So even the very first words of this section are instructive for us. Verse 10 says, **Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.** Paul and Silas didn't quit simply because people hated the truth. How many times have people resisted the truth so far in his ministry? Many times. How many times has he been persecuted or run out of town? Many.

© Copyright 2008 by Phillip G. Kayser. Permission is granted to all readers to download, print, and distribute on paper or electronically any Sermons, provided that each reprint bear this copyright notice, current address, and telephone number, and provided that all such reproductions are distributed to the public without charge. They may not be sold or issued in book form, CD-ROM form, or microfiche without prior permission.

Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

Paul and Silas are probably still hurting from the beating they received three months before in Philippi. They have just been run out of town once again in Thessalonica. They have been separated from their dearly loved friends. If you read 1 and 2 Thessalonians, you realize that a deep bond had developed with that church. And Paul grieved that he could not come back to them. The security demanded in verse 9 would impoverish that church if he came back. He had once again been sucked in, washed up and blown over. But he did not quit in this verse, and he did not quit in verse 14 when Paul is once again run out of town. They could have easily become bitter, angry and quit. But they did not.

Last week we looked at the psychology of resistance to the truth. But today I want to focus primarily upon the messengers and receivers of truth. When God has called you men to bring the truth of God's word lovingly into your family, you dare not quit singing like Chippie did. You cannot get bitter, or sullen or give up. And every one of us is called to be a messenger of the truth to some degree, and it is important that we learn how to be godly messengers.

2. Unswerving from God's Purpose (v. (v. 10b)

When we examine the messenger, Paul, we see that he was unswerving from God's purpose. God's purpose for Paul was to go to the Jew first and then to the Greek. And he doesn't waste any time doing it. He doesn't take a week to mope about it and get over his pain. Verse 10 says, **When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.** *When they arrived*, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Even though the Jews were the ones who caused most of Paul's troubles, he was unswerving from God's purpose of ministering to them. It's so easy for pastors to become cowards in the pulpit to protect their own hide. It's so easy for fathers to stop gently bringing the truth into their homes because of apathy or resistance or wanting to be well thought of. It's so easy for mother's to not do the hard work of applying Scripture to the daily teaching and mentoring that they do. But we must be unswerving from God's purpose. We have all been called in one capacity or another to be messengers. And if you want the pulpit to stop preaching the whole counsel of God, you are asking for a wimped out pulpit that you could not respect. Pray that as long as I have breath, I will not swerve from lovingly, but unswervingly fulfilling God's purpose for a pastor. I will blow it from time to time because I am a mere creature. And that's why I expect you to be Bereans to check everything I say against the Scripture. You fathers will blow it from time to time because you are mere creatures. But one phrase that Kevin Swanson uses that I think should

become a theme in this church is that our church is expecting direction, not perfection. This church is expecting direction, not perfection. We should be able to put up with a lot in each other if we see that we are heading in the right direction even if we are still way off the mark and there are still lots of disagreements. Some of you mothers might be able to do devotions better than your husbands can, but be delighted when he is trying. Don't feel like you need to correct everything. Rejoice that there is direction. He's heading in the right direction. Be gentle on him.

3. Authoritative (Scripture) but not authoritarian (v. 11)

But this must be balanced with point 3 under "Paul." Though Paul always preached the authority of God's Word, he was never authoritarian. There is a big difference. He preached with the authority of God's Word, but he was never authoritarian. Notice that verse 11 says, **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.** I want you to notice that Luke praised them for not instantly believing everything that Paul said. Paul didn't feel like he had to force the message down their throat or that his authority has been rejected. No. The messenger was not the highest authority – the message was. And Paul praises them for making the message of the Bible the highest authority. The reason Paul's message was authoritative was that he always backed up everything that he said from the Bible. The reason it wasn't authoritarian was because he didn't set himself up as the highest authority.

When you see fathers, pastors or other leaders getting angry and frustrated when people don't believe them, you've got these leaders edging over into authoritarianism. And it's very easy for that to happen in any of us. But our only authority is the authority of the Word. Even when people reject the message, you present the authority of God's Word and let it do its work. If what you are teaching really is the Word of God, resistance is really resistance to Christ, and not to you, and you shouldn't take it personally. It's so easy for the messenger to take opposition personally. Realizing this distinction between authority and authoritarianism can make you more relaxed and patient as you persevere in being the messenger and letting Christ do the work of changing. As the Puritans worded it, "The only voice that should be heard in the church is the voice of Christ speaking through the Scriptures." Messengers need to be pointing to Him.

And so if somebody tells you something that you don't agree with, don't cut off relationship or conversation. Don't take it personally. Sure they disagree with you, but it is before the Lord that you stand, not before them.

Here's what I suggest. Throw the ball back into their lap by saying, "Tell me more. I would love to hear your Scriptural basis for that." Where legalism is involved, more times than not they won't have a Scriptural basis. And by saying, "Tell me more. I would love to hear your Scriptural basis for that," you have accomplished two things: 1) You have affirmed your love and connection to the person even though you disagree with him, and 2) it teaches the messenger that if he has a case then he needs to be able to back it up with the Bible. Otherwise he is not being a messenger like Paul. Now let's say that he does back it up from the Bible, but you think he has misinterpreted the Bible. The temptation is to get frustrated and to break off conversation and relationship. But if you remember that it is Christ's authority, not man's that you are dealing with, it can help you to not be upset with the messenger. You can either discuss from the Scripture why you disagree, or if that is getting you nowhere, or you aren't interested in discussing it for the umpteenth time, you can say something like, "Well, I respect your desire to submit to God's Word, but I too am captive to the Word of God and I don't yet see it your way and we need to have patience with each other." Or you could say, "Thank you for sharing that with me. I will prayerfully think about it. It doesn't make sense to me right now, but I respect you and will at least take the time to examine this." Either way, you have succeeded in teaching the messenger that his responsibility is to the Word, not to a system, and secondly, your responsibility is to hear the Word, not a man. But it still maintains fellowship while potentially moving people away from legalism (or at least judgmentalism).

But because Paul preached the Scriptures, his message carried enormous authority and any who resisted it were indeed resisting God. This frees leaders up to relax when they minister the Word. It is not their duty to change hearts. It is their duty to be as faithful to God as they can when they speak. And when both the messengers and the receivers have these attitudes their can be disagreements and yet mutual respect.

4. Connected (vv. 14-15)

The fourth point under "Paul" is that Paul was also connected. We will be looking at verses 14-15 in a minute. They describe Paul's connection with Silas, Timothy, the brethren and those who conducted him on his trip. Paul did not do this as a loner. And it's probably one of the things that rescued him from becoming like Chippie the parakeet. He was connected. And we must be connected. Hebrews 4 doesn't call us to be each other's Holy Spirit, but it certainly calls us to be encouraging and exhorting each other to keep on keeping on. You cannot read the numerous one-anothering

passages without realizing that God has never desired His messengers to be lone criers in the wilderness. Even John the Baptist was surrounded by an encouraging team – emphasis on the “encouraging.” When pastors become so isolated from their elders and brethren that they are pretty much just doing their own thing, they have been diverted from God’s purpose for messengers. Being God’s spokesman does not mean independency, arrogance or pride. God has called us to need each other, and Paul is a great illustration of working with the body. Husbands need the support of wives. Wives need the support of husbands in their role of being messengers to the children.

5. Driven; passion (v. 15)

But the Spirit of God also gave Paul an enormous drive. Verse 15 says, **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.** Paul was the vision caster, and boy was he driven. Not all of us will be driven to the same degree that Paul was, but each of us needs to have a passion for our unique callings. You mothers have a unique way in which God has called you to be messengers. And it is so easy for Satan to discourage you and get you off track from that. Perhaps you have gotten so tired, disillusioned, so frustrated or heavy in spirit that you have lost your passion. Other passions have displaced the passion God had originally given you for your calling. If that is true, I urge you to repent and to ask God to restore to you the passion for motherhood that you once had. Don’t be like Chippie. By faith begin to sing again, and ask God to make the song come more and more from your heart.

B. *Silas and Timothy*

1. Finishing the work of Paul (v. 14b)

Well, Paul wasn’t the only messenger here. Verse 14 talks about Silas and Timothy taking on the work that Paul leaves. **Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.** The persecutors right now are after Paul, so Silas and Timothy step into the gap and they finish what Paul was not able to finish. I believe that they had all along been filling in the gaps. They were after all part of the team. They weren’t just watching.

And we need Timothy’s and Silas’s in our congregation. Wives who carry on the work of their husbands while the husband is away. Children who carry on the work of their fathers in their relationship with each other.

We need members who can continue what Rodney and I cannot accomplish on our own. Husbands, wives and children - your ministry with each other can either fulfill or undermine the message of your “Paul.” We need to learn how to apply these Scriptures to ourselves as individuals, families, businesses and to our church situations.

2. Bold in the face of danger (v. 14b)

Point 2 - it took boldness for Silas and Timothy to do this work. These Jewish opposers don't like the truth, from whatever source it may come from. And it takes courage to keep speaking the truth when a Paul is not there to back you up. It takes courage to put a wet blanket over gossip. It takes courage to oppose heresy that is spouted when a Paul is not present. And I love the way some of you guys are bold to deal with far-out heresies. You don't just wait for the pastor to show up.

3. Flexible, responsive team members (v. 15)

The other thing we see about Timothy and Silas is that they were responsive team members. We've already read in verse 15 that these loyal brothers were quick to stay in Berea when needed and quick to go to Athens when Paul needed them there. They were flexible and responsive. They were willing to serve. Their heart was captured by the message of truth and they wanted to do everything they could to support Paul's message of truth. And you can apply this in terms of unity within the family.

C. *The Brethren*

1. Sent Paul away. ☺ (vv. 10,14)

The third group of people who were messengers of the truth was the brethren. Verse 10 says, **Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.** The brethren in Berea did the same thing in verse 14. **Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away...** If brethren want to send you away all the time, you might get a bit paranoid. But context is king.

2. Concern for Paul's welfare, not their own

The only reason they wanted to send Paul away was to protect him. They so loved the truth that he was bringing that rather than risking Paul's neck by keeping him there, they send him on so that the truth can be heard by other cities.

3. Assisted Paul (v. 15)

In fact, some assisted by going with Paul in verse 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.** They traveled with Paul all the way to Athens just to make sure that he was safe and was set up for his next ministry. I think this shows such a cool heart. It shows that the message of truth was king for these brethren. They wanted the Word to triumph as far as it could.

And I really appreciate that about this congregation. It would be easy to try to keep the message of truth within these four walls. But you guys have had a vision to expand it through the web, through Biblical Blueprints, through missions trips, and through individual ministries within this congregation. These brethren showed a similar passion for truth that Paul did. And we will look at them a bit more in a few minutes.

II. The Opposers of the Truth

A. *This unbelief was not satisfied with unbelief*

But first, let me make a few comments about the opposers of truth. Verse 13 says, **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.** Just so that you can see how amazing this is, note that Berea is about 50 miles away from Thessalonica! That's a long ways to travel! That's almost the distance from here to Lincoln. And they either walked it or went by horse. That's about two days of travel in order to oppose Paul. That's quite a sacrifice. One thing you *cannot* accuse these opposers of is indifference. They did everything they could to stop Paul's preaching. As Jesus said, **"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."** What we see here is that this variety of unbelief was not satisfied with simple unbelief. They want to force everyone else to have the same unbelief. They are not content with being wrong; they don't feel good until everyone stands in their wrong doctrine. Why? That ought to seem a little bit strange. Why can't they just say, "OK, go ahead and believe that if you want. I'm not convinced." Why do we have 2000 years of history of people undermining churches, causing division and opposing doctrine? When you read the Trinitarian debates in the early church, you will see that the behavior of some was just shocking. It's sometimes irrational.

B. The zeal of those who undermined Paul

And why was there such zeal among these unbelieving Jews? It's not rational. And it's not always there among unbelievers. We know many unbelievers who could care less what you believe.

C. The demonic was at the root of this constant opposition

Well, Paul gives a commentary on what these Thessalonians were doing in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, and he calls this opposition from the Thessalonians opposition from Satan. The demonic was at the root of the opposition. That explains the irrational zeal. That explains the irrational emotions. That explains their perseverance in opposing Paul. That explains their blindness to the truth.

And this has been true down through history. Churches have been torn apart by what Scripture calls **a spirit of ill will** that is irrational. Good friends are torn asunder for no good reason. Marriages are split. Churches are split. And when the dust has all settled, people are disillusioned, and like Chippie the parakeet, they have lost their song, their joy and their drive. What they don't realize is that their fight is not with flesh and blood. Sure there were arguments between flesh and blood people, but those arguments were spawned by demons. Keep in mind that if even the apostle Peter was stirred up by Satan in Matthew 16 to tempt Christ, Satan can use any of us. We need to be on guard. And I want to list some of these demons that the Scripture speaks about. There is the spirit of ill will in Judges 9:23. Romans 11:8 speaks of **a spirit of stupor** that keeps people from seeing with spiritual eyes or hearing with spiritual ears. They can listen to sermon after sermon and have it go off their backs like water off a duck's back. 1 John 4:6 speaks of **a spirit of error** that makes people comfortable with the very errors that John confronts in six churches in Revelation 2-3. And he tells those churches that even though He appreciates much that is in the church, if they continue to put up with those errors, God will fight against the church. You see, if Satan can get God to fight against the church, he has succeeded. 1 Timothy 4 speaks of deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. You see, Satan knows how to use the Word of God better than we do. He's been around for 6000 years, and he is an expert at yanking people's chains. There are spirits of jealousy, anger, fear, ill will, and division. And until a church is willing to take on such demons in spiritual warfare, they are fighting the wrong enemy. As Paul later said, ultimately we are not fighting flesh and blood, but **against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the**

heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

My point in bringing all of this up is that some of you do not realize the extent to which demons have been pushing your emotional buttons in getting you to fight with each other. Don't see your enemy as your spouse. Your enemy is the devil and you need to do all in your power to fight the right enemy and to love your spouse and to live godly with your spouse. When division and lack of love is displayed, don't react in the flesh. It's so easy to take on the offenses of others. It's so easy to respond judgmentally to judgmentalism. Instead, go to prayer and take on these demonic forces. Counsel people to not be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good. If need be, confront your antagonist in a spirit of gentleness and love. But always remember that they are not your enemy. The devil is.

III. The Receivers of the Truth (vv. 11-12)

A. More Fair-Minded (v. 11 a)

So we have looked at the messengers of the truth and the opposers of the truth. Let's end by looking at the receivers of the truth. We'll just focus on verses 11-12. These Berean Jews did not yet have this demonic influence in their midst. They were not yet poisoned to Paul. They were not yet blinded to Scripture. And as Paul spoke to them Luke says the Bereans had seven praiseworthy characteristics that enabled them to receive the Word.

Verse 11 says, **These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica...** The first characteristic is that they were "fair-minded," and the Greek word for that is interesting. It has two meanings. Polhill says, "(eugenesteros) that originally meant high born but came to have a more general connotation of being open, tolerant, generous, having the qualities that go with good breeding."¹ So my Greek dictionary says, either: "1. pertaining to being of high status, well-born, high-born" or "2. pertaining to having the type of attitude ordinarily associated with well-bred persons, noble-minded, open-minded." (BGAD). Another Dictionary has, "a willingness to learn and evaluate something fairly — 'willingness to learn, to be open-minded, to be noble-minded.'"

There are three things that we can learn from this point. First, being open-minded and fair in dealing with arguments is a praiseworthy virtue. If we are not tolerant, generous with those we disagree with, and open to

¹ John B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman, 2001), p. 363.

listening, then we should learn to be so. God delights in such an attitude. Paul was fair-minded with the Bereans and the Bereans were fair-minded with him.

Second, unless we put on this fair-mindedness, we will not be prepared to have the other characteristics of this verse. In fact, we will be susceptible to the manipulations of the Thessalonians. If we reason with our passions, we will soon close off our brains.

Third, because of the close connection between fair-mindedness and being noble or well-bred, we can deduce that this characteristic can be taught to our children. In fact, the earlier we teach them the better. If we are judgmental, our kids will take that judgmental attitude to the next level. If we are fair-minded and we insist that our children be fair-minded in dealing with those who disagree with the family, there is always the danger that they might believe differently from me. But that is a risk I am willing to take in the interests of having God's praise upon my family. Fair-mindedness is a virtue we need to instill into our lives and into the lives of our children.

B. Received the Word (v. 11b)

The next characteristic is that they received the word. “...in that they received the word...” It doesn't say, “In that they received Paul's prejudices,” or “opinions,” or even “Paul's true statements.” It was the *word of God* that they received.

Why is this a critical distinction to make? Because it's easy to dismiss the word of God in order to defend a position or a system. The first time I began to recognize the fact that I was doing this was when I started attending the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in my early twenties. They only sing the Psalms, and I grew to love the Psalms in that church. But previous to going there I had been in a habit of scanning ahead when I was singing a hymn to make sure that I believed what I was singing. On verses that had bad theology I would either not sing the verse or hold a mental reservation. And I think that is a good habit. Our worship needs to be rational worship. We need to believe what we are singing. But here is the sad part - I found myself doing that with the Psalms. I would not feel comfortable singing a verse because of my Dispensationalism and the verse was presenting what I thought was wrong theology. And I would suddenly catch myself and realize, “I can't do that with the Scripture.” It's me whose got to change. And during my stay there, the Psalms completely cleansed me of my Dispensationalism.

I've had people tell me point blank when I have read a verse on predestination to them, “I don't believe that.” And I have said, “But this is

the Scripture that I am reading.” And they have said, “I don’t believe in predestination. That’s not in the Bible” And I have said, but the word “predestination occurs here in the bible.” In fact, I heard one lady “light into” into my brother John after a sermon because he taught that God knows all the future. And she vigorously denied it because then it would mean that the future is certain. And it didn’t matter how many Scriptures he gave about God’s foreknowledge and omniscience, she was prejudiced against it.

But you know what? *We can be just as guilty.* I’ve seen Calvinists do this with verses that don’t seem to fit into our system. Now don’t get me wrong; I’m a Calvinist. I love the doctrines. I believe they are Biblical. They have transformed my life. But we can’t twist a Scripture to make it fit our system, or our comfort level, or our prejudices. Don’t explain away the so-called tough verses for Calvinists. They are there for a reason. And I believe part of the reason is to put a bit of the fear of God into people. When I hear people say, “Don’t worry about Hebrews 6. You can’t lose your salvation.” The people are missing the fact that the Christians they are talking to may not have been saved in the first place, and they are neutralizing the power of that verse to make them fear God and turn back to God. Never explain away the Scripture. Let it have its full course.

So these hearers received the Word, the whole Word and nothing but the Word. And if we are to receive God’s praise, we must receive God’s Word too. We must be prepared to receive it even if it might be inconvenient. Nothing should trump the Word. Not the pastor’s beliefs; not your beliefs; not the Westminster Confession of Faith’s beliefs. We can take all those things seriously as reliable teachers, but as the Westminster Confession says, the Bible alone is the rule of faith.

C. Eager (“all readiness”) (v. 11c)

The third characteristic was that they were *eager* to receive the Word of God. It says, **they received the word with all readiness...** Literally it means to rush along before the Word. But it means zeal, eagerness, and readiness of mind. This was not a grudging reception of the Word, but a hungry eagerness to get their hands on the Word Paul was preaching. God blesses that kind of an attitude by pouring out more wisdom and grace. Jesus said, **If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.** God gives insight when we are eager to receive the Word. But when He sees that we are grudging receivers of the Word, His heart is not going to be there to open up more to you. Why would He?

D. Searchers/ researchers (v. 11d)

The fourth word is searching or researching. The text says, **and searched the Scriptures...** The Greek word for “searched” means “to sift, to examine closely... to scrutinize” (Mounce). That’s what you are supposed to do with my preaching – to sift, to examine closely, to scrutinize. If people did this, they would be far less likely to be sucked in by a cult. I’ve told you many, many times that you are binding your consciences wrongly if you believe any doctrine simply because I tell you to believe it. The Westminster Confession of Faith doesn’t just oppose implicit faith in the Roman Catholic Church. It opposes all implicit faith. You can’t believe the church simply because the church says it. That’s implicit faith. You must believe it because the Scripture says it. But that means that you’ve got to search the Scripture. Paul did not replace that need for searching. He simply guided them in their search of the Scripture. They still had to evaluate whether they were convinced by His arguments or not. And if Luke praised the Bereans for doing that with Paul, you know that it is imperative and praiseworthy to do that with me.

Some of you have heard things from this pulpit that you don’t believe. I can respect that if you have come to that conclusion from a study of the Word. I praise you for that. But I cannot respect you for rejecting doctrine that you are unwilling to hear out, or read or study. And more importantly, *God* does not respect you if you have rejected a doctrine simply because of your own prejudices. Implicit faith in your own system, whether that system is Calvinistic, Arminian, Charismatic, Cessationist or whatever is still the sin of implicit faith. Faith in a system or person rather than faith in the Scripture is wrong. In 1 Corinthians 1:12 Paul warned the Corinthians, **Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas...”** He was opposing an early spirit of denominationalism. In 3:22 he tells them they needed the ministry of them all – all are yours whether Paul, or Apollos or Cephas. I have learned so much from people and books that are outside our confessional communion. I have seen things that I would otherwise have been blinded to. And it hasn’t made me love our confession less. In fact, it has made me appreciate the genius of the Westminster Confession as the approach that best approximates the liberties that Paul was giving to the Bereans.

E. Daily in the Word (v. 11e)

But verse 11 goes on to say that this searching of the Scripture is not once a year on a controversial item. It says that they **searched the Scriptures daily...** I cannot emphasize enough the importance of digging

into the Word of God on a daily basis. We are commanded in Joshua 1 and Psalm 1 to meditate on God's word every day. Moses said, "**Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe – all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life...** If it's your life, it's got to be daily, just like food is.

F. Giving the benefit of the doubt (v. 11f)

The next phrase says, **to find out whether these things were so.** They wanted to know truth, not soothing words; truth, not fun words; truth, not what reinforces what I already believe. And so they gave Paul the benefit of the doubt. But they didn't believe it until they could see it in the bible. And our church wants to give you all the same liberty. It's a liberty to come to your own conclusions. It's a liberty to take the time needed to be convinced. It's a liberty to not have your conscience bound by the Confession, the pastor, the elders or John Calvin. But give the teaching the benefit of the doubt and be willing to examine it.

G. Believers of the truth (v. 12)

The last characteristic of these Bereans was that they were believers of the truth. **Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.** There are some chauvinists who want women to not think for themselves. But this text indicates that they didn't have implicit faith in their husbands. They had faith in the Bible. Faith is what we are called to. And if we do not continue to live by faith, we will revert to the old opposition to the truth.

Just as a postscript, it is interesting that if you were to go to Berea today, you would find the church of Berea persecuting Christians in the same way that Jews in this chapter were persecuting Christians. It is now the Greek Orthodox Church that has sunken into dead ritual and dead theology and they are severely persecuting the true church. God's Spirit has broken in afresh in that city and a growing body of vital Christians has arisen who have to meet in secret to avoid oppression. Yet they are alive, and many people are coming to Christ. And they are hungry once again for the truth. But I bring that up to point out that nothing in life is static. Any individual or group of people can eventually become instruments of Satan to oppose the truth. So we must be careful that we do not lose our saltiness and that we remain new wineskins that the wine of God's grace can fill.

So to summarize, this passage calls us to be godly messengers of truth and godly believers of truth, and to not be discouraged by those who resist

the truth. Only God can change the heart, and we can take encouragement that He knows when and how to do that. When the wind is taken out of your sails, refuse to be like Chippie the parakeet. Sing the song of grace that God has given, and rejoice that if God is for you, no one can successfully be against you. Be like this small group of leaders and believers in Berea. Amen.