

How Should We Receive the Preached Word?

Acts 17:10-15

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"Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." - Acts 17:11

Finally, we see a refreshing break in the pattern of mixed reception we've been seeing in Paul's missionary efforts. The Berean Jews had such a positive and exemplary response to the preaching of the Gospel that they have served as an inspiration for believers for almost 2,000 years. We still hear people encouraging others to "Be a Berean." So, what did the Bereans do that was so exemplary, and how can we truly imitate their example?

We're told that the Bereans "*received the word with all eagerness*" and that they were "*examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*" Whenever we sit under the preaching of the word of God, we should be eager to receive and yet careful to evaluate. After all, what is being preached is God's word, and if we love God, we should always be eager to receive His word, to hear Him speak to us. However, the human vessel bringing us the word of God is fallible, and so we need to be careful to examine the Scriptures to see if what is being taught is faithful to the written word of God or not.

The church is regularly plagued by two problems:

1. People who sit under faithful Bible preaching and teaching are often apathetic, not eagerly desiring to receive the word.
2. People who sit under false teaching masquerading as faithful Bible preaching are often overly eager and lacking in discernment, taking as God's word that which is really false man-made teaching.

Underlying these twin realities are a basic reality of human nature and also real spiritual warfare. The basic reality of human nature is that people often tend to be either critical and not enthusiastic or else very enthusiastic and not very critical or careful. In other words, some people tend to be driven by their critical thinking skills and other people tend to be driven by their hearts. The spiritual warfare is the fact that Satan wants people to be enthusiastic about false teaching and apathetic about the word of God, and so he actively works toward those ends.

Sadly, some people take "being a Berean" to an extreme, in a one-sided way. Often these people are simply critical and judgmental, harshly condemning anyone who ever says anything they think is not 100% accurate. That's not being a Berean. The Bereans received the word with eagerness. They were not negative, nit-picky people. God's word is to be received, not criticized. Yes, we must be careful to ensure that it is God's word, but there's a world of difference between being careful and bring a critic.

So, let's be Bereans, by all means. Let's receive the word with eagerness. Let's make sure the word preached is indeed the word of God, but then let's obey and respond with joy to the word. It is God's gift, after all!

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your word and for faithful preachers of Your word. Thank You for loving us enough that You speak to us regularly through Your word. Give us Your Spirit that we may be discerning and give us an eagerness, a real hunger for Your word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

