

**Acts 17: 10-15; “These were More Fair-Minded”, Sermon #63 in the series –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
August 8th, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.**

So, we see here that when Paul and Silas came to Berea, they did what their custom was, and they went into the synagogue of the Jews to preach. We see that they got a better reception there at Berea than they did at Thessalonica, and so we need to ask ourselves why this was. It says in the text that it was because those who were listening to Paul preach were more “fair-minded” than those in Thessalonica. It is this word – Fair-minded that I want us to think about now. What does it mean that these listeners were more fair-minded?

I believe that it means the following things. 1st of all – It meant that they received the word with all readiness. 2nd – It meant that they searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. And 3rd – It meant that those who believed were not willing to have their minds stirred up against Paul and Silas. And so let us think this way as we listen to this message. If we want to think of ourselves as fair-minded, we will need to think carefully as to whether we fit the description given us here.

1st of all – To be fair-minded means to receive the word with all readiness.

Or “readiness of mind”, it says in the King James. The ESV has it – “They received the word with all eagerness”. The New American Standard translates it – “These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica for they received the word with great eagerness.” So, I want you to think about yourself now, and to ask yourself, do I receive the word with all readiness of mind, or with great eagerness? For this is what it is to be fair-minded, or noble-minded. Readiness and eagerness refer to the disposition of your mind to receive the word of God. These listeners at Berea were open to hear what Paul and Silas had to say concerning God and the gospel of Christ.

They were eager to hear what Paul and Silas had to say if what they were saying built upon the Old Testament Scriptures. If what Paul and Silas preached to them, opened up the Scriptures to reveal something about Christ their Messiah, something about how they could come to know God, or to have the knowledge of the Scriptures opened up to them in a reasonable and understandable way, they were very willing to receive it. They wanted to hear more about this Jesus that Paul was preaching, and how it could be shown to them that He was the Christ. Let me ask you now whether you think about how you receive the word of God. Do you receive it with readiness? That is, when the word is preached to you, do you want to hear it because you understand that it is God’s very word to you?

Are you convinced that you want to hear it because you have faith to believe that it is God’s book that is being preached to you, and that it is not just the word of the man who is preaching it to you? Do you know in your heart that the word of God is not just a set of books setting forth the opinions of men? Can you perceive that the Bible is infallible and that it is authoritative? Can you affirm that it comes from God Himself? Is there, in your mind, an eagerness to hear it because your heart and your mind yearn for the living God; that you want to know His Christ, the One whom He sent into the world to be your sin-bearer? Do you want to know more about Christ and how by faith, calling upon His name, you can be saved?

If you believe these truths, then you truly can come to know God. And you will indeed learn more about God and eternal life, and Christ and His kingdom and glory, how by faith you can be found in His righteousness, and know all of your sins cleansed and forgiven. If God is working in your heart, you really will want to listen to the good preaching of God’s holy word. Some people are not eager to hear the word, and they do not have a readiness of mind to hear it preached, because they stumble over God’s having committed His word, in the act of preaching, to a man. They think that listening to man preach is foolishness. They think – Well, this man who preaching is not a very impressive man. Why should I listen to him? But when God is working in your heart, He will be creating in you a readiness to hear, and even an eagerness to hear. Why? Because His Spirit is

striving with you to receive the truth. If you do not resist His good working, He will open your mind to hear, and to consider, and to respond to the gospel.

And yet we know also that without God's showing mercy to you, to open your heart to respond to the gospel, you will always be resisting. You will always be concluding that you do not want to receive the wisdom which leads to salvation. Let me show you that the apostle Paul himself declares this in God's word. Turn over to 1st Corinthians chapter 1, verse 18. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Now, I hope that you can see from this verse, that all people who are unsaved, by nature, they think that the message of Jesus Christ, having to die on the cross for their sins, is foolishness.

They think that they may be a sinner in a general sense, and they may think that they might need a little instruction, a little help. But they do not think that they need to be saved. Why should I believe that Christ had to die for me? But St. Paul says that this is the very reason that they are perishing. This is the very reason that they do not know God, or love Him as they ought. This is the reason that they continue on sinning against God, and even self-righteously thinking of themselves as pretty good people. And it is the very reason that they will finally perish in their sins, as long as they hold on to this attitude. They are not fair-minded, they are closed-minded. There is not a readiness or an eagerness to hear the word of the cross.

But look at verses 19-21. "For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.'" "Where is the wise?" "Where is the scribe?" "Where is the disputer of this age?" "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" "For since in the wisdom of God, the world through (*its*) wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." There it is. There is the great difference between the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God. God's wisdom says you must believe in Christ. Man's wisdom says believe in yourself, and your own supposed wisdom and goodness and you will be all right. But Proverbs 14: 12 says – "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

This is why Paul says in 1st Corinthians 2: 1 – "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God." "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." "I was with you in weakness and fear, and in much trembling." "And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that you faith should be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." Paul knew that men could not come to know God through their own wisdom; or if they leaned on their own understanding. He knew that God will destroy the wisdom of the wise because it was that which was destroying them.

Why does the wisdom of the earthly wise man need to be destroyed? It is so he can find the greater wisdom of God which leads to salvation. Listen to 1st Corinthians 2: 14 – "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The natural man, or the man without the Spirit, resists the idea that he must believe the gospel in order to be saved, he does not by nature receive the things of the Spirit of God. There is this resistance to the truth of the gospel and the man who preaches it.

The natural man says – I am wise in myself. How is that man's self-wisdom to be destroyed then? It is only destroyed when he hears in the gospel that he is truly blind and a great sinner before God. And only God Himself then can open his eyes to consider that Christ had to go to the cross as the perfect man; to take his place there, and suffer the agonies of the cross, so that he could find forgiveness and the true meaning of life. The meaning of life is not found in yourself and in the things which you contemplate in your own thoughts, about what you want to pursue and get out of life. The meaning of your life is found in your coming to know God, through Jesus Christ; and then in knowing Him, you will have real life; you will have eternal life. You are given the Holy Spirit to dwell in your heart. The seed of righteousness He will plant there, and He Himself will

teach you all things which are necessary to your living a godly life by means of Christ's grace, by revealing to you the truth of the Bible. You must be fair-minded to see this. You must be noble-minded enough to humble yourself to believe it.

2nd – To be fair-minded meant that they searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

In other words, they didn't just receive the truth of the word of God because Paul and Silas were declaring it to them. They wanted to check the word of God for themselves to see if the things which these missionary men were speaking to them were really the truth of what the Scriptures did declare. It shows a spiritual noble-mindedness in you if you will take and compare what the preacher has said, with the truth of what the Scriptures actually say. This is really a very important thing; to know what the Scriptures say, for yourself. Because, if you know what they really say, it will be a safeguard to you, to keep you from being deceived in regard to the gospel itself, and any of the orthodox doctrines of the faith; these truths which must be held fast by you, in order for you to be saved, and to be faithful to God, and to grow up into Christ and to be mature.

Preachers are called to assert the truths of the word of God, and nothing but the truths of the word of God. Whatever the preacher asserts, he must prove it from the word of God. Whenever any man asserts some doctrine to be true, he must be able to sufficiently prove that it is true by his appeal to the word of God. And then, the people whom he is preaching to, should check for themselves to verify that what he is saying is what the Bible says. What does God's book say? That is always the ultimate question and the greatest consideration in terms of whether any truth asserted by a preacher ought to be believed. The Bereans were fair-minded because they searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Let me ask you now, whether this is something that you personally do?

Do you go to the Scriptures for yourself to verify that the doctrines that I preach to you each and every Sunday are true and orthodox according to the Scriptures? When I preach Christ to you and I tell you that He had no sin, and that His righteousness was a perfect righteousness, do you search the Scriptures to prove that it is so? When I preach to you what Christ's death accomplished; that He died for sinners, do you receive what I tell you, that God imputed your trespasses to Him, there at the cross, so that you would not only be forgiven and pardoned, but that His perfect righteousness would also be imputed to you. Do you believe me when I tell you that you are now seen by God to be perfect and complete in Him, and clothed in the robe of His righteousness? Do you search the Scriptures to see if it is so?

If you read 2nd Corinthians 5: 21, and Romans 5: 19, and Isaiah 61: 10, you will see for yourself that this is the case, and you can rejoice. You are being fair-minded when you act this way to confirm for yourself what I preach to you. In doing so, you will come to have assurance of faith, for your salvation rests entirely upon Christ and His finished work, and not upon yourself. Your consistency of obedience takes place by Christ's grace. It is the work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. I will tell you that you must persevere in the faith of Christ to the end of your life in order to be saved. It is the faith of Christ which covers both your righteousness and whatever sins that you commit.

It is on-going faith in His blood and righteousness which will give you assurance of hope, that your good works and your sincere obedience are accepted by God. And they will be the evidence to yourself and others that you have a true and saving faith. Count Nicholas Von Zinzendorf in our hymn # 439 in our hymnal says – "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness, my beauty are, my glorious dress. Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head." "Bold shall I stand in Thy great day; for who ought to my charge shall lay?" "Fully absolved through these I am from sin and fear, from guilt and shame." "When from the dust of death I rise to claim my mansion in the skies, even then this shall be all my plea, Jesus hat lived, hath died for me." Let me ask you whether you search the scriptures to find out if what I am teaching you is so, and is true? You are fair-minded if you do.

Do you see your perseverance in relation to your own righteousness or Christ's? Some professed Christians see their perseverance in terms of their own righteousness. But the apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 3, verse 8 says – "I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." "Not that I have already attained or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid of me."

I like what Thomas Boston says in his Works, Vol. 2, P. 32, on Perseverance. He says – "To persevere is, to continue and abide in a state into which one is brought." "And this perseverance is a firm and constant continuance in the state of grace, even to the end of one's life." (Matthew 1: 22 & Colossians 1: 23) "It is opposed to total apostasy and utter falling away from grace." "It is continuing and holding on, joined to a good beginning." Matthew 10: 22 says – "'And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.'" "But he who endures to the end will be saved." Colossians 1: 23 says – "If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul became a minister."

I think that this is good, and I would only add another verse to this so that you might think about your responsibility in perseverance. Job chapter 17, verse 9 says – "Yet the righteous will hold to his way, (that is perseverance) and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger." This is a wonderful principle to remember in living your life to God. If you will hold to the way of righteousness and strive to have clean hands and a pure heart, God will help you daily to persevere in the faith of Jesus Christ. After all, to whose image are you being conformed, except to Christ; He who was perfectly pure and holy in all of His behavior, and who went to the cross as a sinless sacrifice?

Psalms 24: 3 – "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?" "Or who may stand in His holy place?" "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully." "He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." "This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face." That, my beloved brethren, is perseverance; seeking the blessing from the Lord in being able to persevere in righteousness in having clean hands and a pure heart. When sins are found in your heart or life, you confess them. And you seek the face of God so that you might have and continue to have through the cleansing of His blood and the covering of Christ's righteousness, clean hands and a pure heart.

3rd – Being fair-minded meant that those who believed were not willing to have their minds stirred up against Paul and Silas, but helped them.

Verses 12 and 13 say – "Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men." "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." Now, in closing this message, I would have you take notice of the fact that many of those who listened to Paul preach the gospel to them, believed. It says that there were not a few of the Greeks who believed, and among them were prominent women as well as men. In other words, quite a few of the leading citizens of this city in Macedonia came to saving faith in Christ. God was doing great things for them in that city in the salvation of these people. Whenever a great work like this is done by Christ through His Holy Spirit, Satan moves wicked men to oppose it. In this case, the word of Paul's successful preaching reached those same wicked men in Thessalonica who had persecuted Paul, and they came to Berea and stirred up the crowds there as well.

But you will notice the care and concern of the brethren there, for Paul and Silas. Verse 14 and 15 say – "Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and

Timothy remained there.” “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 have seen now, as we have studied the persons who received the gospel from Paul in both Thessalonica and Berea, we can observe that they had a great love for him, and this was evidenced in their taking measures to protect him by sending him away from where they were, farther on, to preach the gospel in other places. I would say that they did this because they were fair-minded. They were not ashamed of the gospel or of Paul, and they wanted to do what they could to help him, and further the good work of preaching to which he was called.

Their minds were not stirred up against Paul, neither did they believe the false reports that were coming out against him. Both those who believed in Thessalonica and those who believed in Berea had this same holy attitude, to love and affirm the work of the apostle who was being spoken against continually and persecuted so much that he had to move on. You see the importance of the words which Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica sometime later. He says in 1st Thessalonians 2: 13 – “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”

If you are fair-minded you will always think well of those who first preached the gospel to you. You will stand with them and support them when they are attacked by unrighteous but religious men. You will help them when they are persecuted, and spoken against. 1st Thessalonians 2: 14-16 – “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus.” “For you also suffered the same from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sin; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.”

So, let me tell you in closing, how Paul thought of those believers at Thessalonica, who he wrote to. He knew that there were many there in that church who were really Berean in their spirit, even though they had a slow start perhaps when he first came to them. They were noble-minded; they were fair-minded too. If you love the one who preaches the word to you, one of the reasons will be because you know the power of God has accompanied his words to you from God’s word. He has sown the good things of the word of God upon the good ground of your heart and you are now bringing forth fruit to God. And he sees that you want to continue to receive the word and search the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

You will always be thankful to have more understanding of the word through him. And he will want to see you rejoicing in the truth, and living it out more and more. What a blessed outcome for all in Christ’s church, comes in this holy way. 1st Thessalonians 2: 17-20 – “But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.” “Therefore we wanted to come to you – even I, Paul, time and again – but Satan hindered us.” “For what is our hope, or joy or crown of rejoicing?” “Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” “For you are our glory and joy.” Paul knew that even those in Thessalonica, many of them had become fair-minded Christians. May each of you be so too!