

Acts 17:10-15 (WCF 1:8-10) “The Berean Spirit”

For the Children: Most people work hard at the things they really love. They spend a lot of time playing or watching or even studying rugby, or some other sport. They read up on cars, the different types and how to fix them. And so on. If we really love God’s Word, we should be spending time not only reading it, but studying how to understand it better. The more we know God’s Word, the more we can use one part of it to help us understand another part. **Questions:** Which is better for helping us understand the Bible – the Church, or the Bible itself? Who is the best at explaining what the Bible means? How many hours do you spend trying to learn more about God’s Word each week?

Introduction:

First Point: The Right to Search

- 1) The Noble Approach: The Jews in Thessalonica had been very hostile to Paul. The Bereans, in contrast, were more noble. They were eager to receive the Word of God; they searched the OT carefully to find the Truth; and they came to it with openness to God’s will. See 1 Jn. 4:1f
- 2) Not So Quick!: The Bereans’ carefulness is seen in that they do this examining “daily” – it is not done in haste, but takes some time to research carefully. This shows respect for the Word. Nor do they simply take the word of human “experts” or men of authority: they want to know what God says
- 3) Private Interpretation: Men are given the privilege of access to the Bible in their own language, so that they can do this work and discover God’s will from His Word, rather than depending on fallible men or the Church to tell them what to believe. For God is the Supreme Judge and Witness of the Truth. The “Sufficiency” and “Perspicuity” of Scripture mean that the Bible needs no supplementation from men. This does not mean the individual has the right to twist the Scripture to suit himself, but only to find what the Scripture itself actually says

Second Point: The Way to Search

- 1) The Right Aim: To get the right answers from God’s Word, we need to have the right aim – “to see if these things were so.” We must be searching for *God’s* verdict, and with a willingness to submit to Him
- 2) Scripture Interpreting Scripture: Because God is the Supreme Judge, so is His Word in all controversies and questions about doctrine and practice. The greatest interpreter of God’s Word, therefore, is the Lord Himself. He gives His verdict only by Word and Spirit. To interpret His Word we look, then, to the original languages, to immediate context and broader context – the whole counsel of God. We look at parallel passages and other doctrines that impinge upon our passage
- 3) More Clear to Less Clear: WCF 1:9 adds that as we do the above, we use the more clear passages to explain those less clear to us, rather than basing doctrines upon that which is not clear to us, in a speculative way. In other words, we keep in mind the doctrine of Scripture’s perspicuity – that all we need to know to be saved and serve the Lord is somewhere taught clearly and simply

Third Point: The Benefit of Searching

- 1) Confidence in Scripture: Doing such painstaking work with the riches of Word helps convict us that mere men could not have written this Book – it is God’s Word. The Lord graciously blesses such work nourishing us, and increasing our wisdom and maturity
- 2) Many Believed: Hence we find that when the Bereans took this approach, “THEREFORE *many* believed” – in contrast to the “some believed” in hostile Thessalonica (17:4). A Berean spirit is a great witness to unbelievers!
- 3) Opposition Serving Its Purpose: But even when there is opposition, that too serves God’s purpose. When the Thessalonican Jews came to Berea to oppose Paul, it only caused him to be driven on to spread the Gospel more widely – as the Lord intended. His purpose was to outwork Christ’s victory by taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth, by the power of His Word and Spirit

Conclusion: