

## Receiving the Word with Eagerness

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Acts: The Spirit Moving / Acts 17:1-15 / February 22, 2026

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### **Introduction:**

Throughout the book of Acts, Luke often highlights three main things in varying degrees to challenge, encourage, and strengthen faith: witness to the gospel, responses to that witness, and the Spirit of God moving. Sometimes he develops his main point through extended, detailed narratives; other times, he advances it by weaving together shorter scenes. When studying Scripture, one of the most important things to do is follow the author's flow of thought. This is the way he moves through material to reveal the main point. Often, authors of narrative passages use a story arc where a problem builds to a climax through a rising tension, followed by that problem's resolution and a trailing action. In these passages, the main point is found in the climax and resolution with the rest of the material enforcing and clarifying it. However, there are other methods used, one of which is found in our passage today where the main point is made by comparing two stories. Consider how Luke's structure points to this before we dive in. In Acts 17:1-2, Luke writes, "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in." Following this, we see the teaching of Paul and responses to it in Thessalonica. Then, in verse 10, Luke joins the conclusion of this story with the setting of the next saying, "The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue." Then follows this with different and similar responses to Paul's teaching. Note how both settings have Paul and Silas arriving at a city and entering a Jewish synagogue, followed by responses to Paul's teaching. This structure shows Luke's main point is found in the comparison of what happens in these stories. To see that point, we'll closely consider Paul's teaching and each response to it. First, in verses 2-3, we see Paul teaching that,

### **Jesus is the Necessary Suffering and Risen Messiah**

Pay attention to the details given for Paul's teaching. Look at verses 2-3, "And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.'" Note, first, the main part of his teaching in the middle of verse 3, "that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead." He wasn't just teaching about the promise of the Christ's suffering and resurrection; he was teaching its necessity. Church, it is not only important to know of Christ's suffering and resurrection, we must understand its necessity. Listen to Jesus' repeated emphasis on this. In Luke 9:22, Jesus says, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." In Luke 24:26, Jesus said to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" It was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise. Why? Jesus gives the purpose in Luke 24:46-47, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." The Christ suffered and rose for the forgiveness of sins. Note what else Paul was teaching at the end of verse 3, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." This tells us two things. First, Paul had been teaching them about the life, death, and resurrection of the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Second, Paul proclaimed this Jesus is the Messianic King God promised would come from David's line. Therefore, Jesus' death and resurrection not only happened but was necessary because He was the Christ. Now, look back at how Luke says Paul was teaching these things in verses 2-3, "on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving" this truth. Paul reasoned with them over several Sabbath days, using the Scriptures to explain and prove his message. Because Paul wanted them to know this was what God determined, he carefully used the Scriptures to explain and prove the Christ must suffer and rise, showing Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection proves He is the necessary suffering and risen Messiah.

In the rest of this section, Luke purposefully compares how,

### **This Truth was Rejected in Jealousy and Received with Eagerness**

While Luke highlights the Jews in Thessalonica rejecting this truth, we should note it's not the only response. Look at verses 4-5, "And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd." Luke begins with a diverse response of people being persuaded he was speaking truth, including some Jews, devout Greeks, and women of high standing in Thessalonica. Gospel witness was effective. However, he quickly contrasts this with Jews who were jealous. Their jealousy may have been of Paul's success or Gentiles receiving salvation as both were problematic because it made the gospel attractive and redefined God's covenant people. So, they formed a mob with wicked men and attack the house where Paul and Silas were staying, disturbing the peace of the city. Notice how jealousy consumes them in verses 6-9, "And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, 'These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.' And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go." When they can't find Paul and Silas, they dragged their hosts to trial. Pay attention to their charge. Referring to the disturbance in Rome that led the Jews dispersion, they claimed Jason's guests would cause similar trouble in Thessalonica. Why? Because they opposed Caesar's decrees by proclaiming Jesus as king. This troubled everyone, so the city authorities make Jason, and the other brothers pay a bond of sorts that included expelling Paul and Silas from the city and keeping them from returning. Note the hardness of heart in the response of the jealous Jews. Their jealousy didn't lead to a simple rejection of the gospel; it moved them to join with evil and use their Messianic hope to attack Christ's witnesses. Family, our enemy isn't satisfied with gospel rejection only, Satan wants gospel witness eradicated. This brings us to the comparison with those in Berea. Look at verses 10-11, "The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. 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." Note how the Jews in Berea are described as more noble, referring to both character and fair-mindedness. And what shows their nobility? How they received Paul's teaching. The term for eagerness goes beyond receptivity and includes action. The Bereans are more noble because they received Paul's words by examining them against Scripture instead of cultural and political concerns. Notice what happened in verses 13-15, "Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed." Again, Luke gives contrasted responses. First, he emphasizes increased belief as we see many Jews believing, along with both Greek women and men of high standing. Then, he contrasts this belief with the jealous Jews from Thessalonica coming to stir up Berea because they learned Paul was proclaiming the word of God there. Luke quickly closes this story with the brothers sending Paul away again, with Silas and Timothy staying behind to strengthen the church before catching up with him in Athens. In these stories, Luke compares rejection with reception, jealousy with eagerness, some being persuaded with many believing. What is Luke's point in these comparisons? To encourage imitation of the Bereans, leaving us with an important question to answer for ourselves,

### **Do We Receive the Word with Eagerness?**

To be clear, this doesn't mean the believers in Thessalonica aren't worth imitating. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7, Paul says to the Thessalonians, "you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia." Their faith in affliction will serve as an example as well. But, at this point, Luke wants us to imitate the Bereans by receiving the word with eagerness and examining the Scriptures as they did. This means two things. First, receive Scripture's testimony to the gospel. We can only speculate what Scriptures Paul used but consider some with me. Isaiah 53 details the necessary sufferings of Christ, proclaiming, "He was despised and rejected by men" and "has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." We "esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions...crushed for our iniquities" bringing "us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." Though we turned away from God, "the Lord has laid on [His Christ] the iniquity of us all." He was "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter," and was "considered ...cut off out of the land of the living." Yet the Lord was the one who willed to "crush him" and "put him to grief" making "an offering for guilt" to "make many to be accounted righteous" by "bearing their iniquities." It is the Lord's Christ who "bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." Psalm 16:8-10, quoted by Peter at Pentecost, says the Christ would "not be shaken" and his "flesh also dwells secure" because God would not "abandon [His] soul to Sheol, or let [His] holy one see corruption." And Psalm 110:1 tells us he would, "Sit at [the Father's] right hand" until His enemies are His footstool. Psalm 2, quoted by believers in Acts 4, speaks to His sufferings, saying, "the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain," and "the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed." But, "the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision" as God declares he has, "set [His] King on Zion, [His] holy hill," making "the nations His heritage" and calling all to "Kiss the Son" and "take refuge in him." These Scriptures, among others, reveal the necessity of Christ's sufferings and resurrection. Though mankind physically crucified Jesus, His death was willed by God to make an offering for our sin. And God raised Him from the dead and has seated Him at His right hand to show that this Jesus intercedes for those who trust in Him while they live in His power and reign. Without the suffering and resurrection of Jesus, we have no hope of forgiveness and reconciliation, but through it we live. This is the gospel in which we stand for all eternity. As Paul says 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, "I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." This gospel in accordance with Scripture is what God's people must believe in and stand firm in. Have you received this testimony to the gospel with eagerness? Second, this means we receive all teaching this way. Family, make sure God's Word is the foundation for your faith, not man's opinions. Let me go a step further. How much of your life and faith is built on the words of a teacher without being weighed against the testimony of Scripture? This is dangerous. At the end of his life, Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-4, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." Why? "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." There is a lot of ear itching teaching out there with teachers sprinkling in Scripture while the bulk of what they say is their opinions, stories, and things you can't see in a passage. It may sound good to our ears because it suits our passions but it is not sound teaching. And this isn't just teaching that condones clearly sinful behaviors or overtly false doctrine. It's teaching that keeps us comfortable in our pride and greed, and teaching that causes us to prioritize our comforts over taking up our cross and following Jesus. This ear itching teaching is designed by the enemy to numb our faith and make us ineffective for Christ's kingdom. And the way to combat the enemy's schemes by examining every teaching by Scripture.

This is why Paul told Timothy before this charge, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Receive the Word with eagerness, like the Bereans, examining the Scriptures daily to see if what you are taught is true.

**Conclusion:**

As the worship team is coming to lead us in our time of reflection and response, let me conclude with an encouragement to imitate another faithful Berean. One of my heroes in the faith is George Müller. His trust in God and prayer life is one of the most admirable from all of church history. If you haven't heard of him, read his autobiography. I guarantee you won't be disappointed. One thing consistently stands out about his life and faith. He was a man who received the word with eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily. It is shared that Müller read the Bible over 200 times. Is that not what drove him to such a deep trust in God? He knew the one He was praying to. Family, let's be a people who receive the word with eagerness like those in Berea and George Müller. Let's examine the Scriptures to see what is true and stand firm in those truths so we don't believe in vain. Would you pray with me as we prepare to respond?