

<sup>17:1</sup> Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures<sup>a</sup>, <sup>3</sup> explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead<sup>b</sup>, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." <sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women<sup>c</sup>. <sup>5</sup> But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people<sup>d</sup>. <sup>6</sup> When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; <sup>7</sup> and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus<sup>e</sup>." <sup>8</sup> They stirred up the crowd

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<sup>a</sup> 17:2 **And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.** Considering the short amount of time Paul may have spent in Thessalonica (three Sabbaths, possibly 3-4 weeks), his first letter to the church reveals that he covered a good deal of ground in his teaching ministry, even addressing sexual purity (see 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8).

Paul "reasoned with them from the Scriptures." The word means that there was dialogue. The instructional forum Paul set up made the Scriptures the center of conversation, possibly a question and answer session. Churches that have a hunger for Truth have lots of questions about Truth.

<sup>b</sup> 17:3 **explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead.** Paul was "explaining" the Scriptures. The word means "to open" and is used of the Lord opening Lydia's heart in Acts 16:4 and of Jesus opening first the Scriptures and then the minds of the Emmaus disciples in Luke 24: 32, 45. This shows that the Bible was expounded by its teachers, that meanings were taken from it instead of forced upon it.

Paul was "giving evidence" from the Scriptures. This word means to "set beside." Paul pointed out current events (in this case the cross and empty tomb) and *set them beside* Scriptural evidence that his propositions about Christ were accurate. Biblical literacy promotes the ability to apply the Bible to the evening news.

<sup>c</sup> 17:4 **And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.** The word "joined" here means they *threw in their lot* with Paul and Silas. The word is used only here in the New Testament and comes from a root which describes the assigning of property. These people knew that they belonged with the saints.

<sup>d</sup> 17:5 **But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.** Jealousy is a powerful force. God is described as jealous because He rightly deserves our worship and we give it to His rivals. Most times—as here—it is driven by the selfish human desire to keep others from sharing the glory we crave.

<sup>e</sup> 17:6-7 **When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."** Jason must have been one of those who threw in their lot with the Christians and their gospel. Paul stayed at Jason's house, which made Jason an accessory to whatever crime the people thought Paul guilty of.

The accusation "upset the world" could be translated *turned the inhabited earth* [Roman Empire, same word at Luke 2:1] *upside down*. The influence of God's word did have an impact in the Roman Empire, but it was not always viewed with favor.

and the city authorities who heard these things. <sup>9</sup> And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews<sup>b</sup>. <sup>11</sup> Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so<sup>c</sup>. <sup>12</sup> Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men<sup>d</sup>. <sup>13</sup> But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds<sup>e</sup>. <sup>14</sup> Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. <sup>15</sup> Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left<sup>f</sup>.<sup>g</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> 17:8-9 **They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.** Jason must have been a prominent member of the Jewish community as well as the general public in Thessalonica. He became the target of the sudden surge of nationalism and was arrested. He posted bond, but must have known that it would be unsafe for Paul to stay.

<sup>b</sup> 17:10 **The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.** God gave Paul good friends when he was in vulnerable situations. The believers saw it as their responsibility to protect this minister of the gospel. Berea was considered a safe distance from Thessalonica.

<sup>c</sup> 17:11 **Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.** Paul started right into his “explaining and giving evidence” drill in the new synagogue. The Bereans were more “noble-minded” than the Thessalonians. It means *of noble birth*. The word is used only two other times in the New Testament (Luke 19:12; 1 Corinthians 1:26), both of those meaning *highborn*. While Paul may be making a statement about the Bereans’ personal character, he may have been saying that the Bereans were *spiritually* richer than the Thessalonians because they searched the Scriptures. It is also possible that the people of Berea were wealthier than the Thessalonians and thus had the means of owning the tools in their homes to study the Scriptures.

The Bereans “received” God’s word eagerly. It was looked upon as a gift. The place biblical instruction takes in a church reveals whether that church looks upon the Bible as a reference book or a delicious, life-giving meal.

The Bereans were “examining” the Scriptures, meaning *to sift up and down* used of criminal investigation in Acts 4:9 and 12:19. The Bible was carefully sorted out so that what God had said was clear. Such an exercise takes work and the rewards are *rich* (see my note on the word translated “noble-minded” in verse 11).

<sup>d</sup> 17:12 **Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.** The Scriptures gave birth to the church.

<sup>e</sup> 17:13 **But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds.** Paul was “proclaiming” the word of God. The word means *to announce* or *to proclaim*. God’s word need not be dressed up, only placed in prominent view.

<sup>f</sup> 17:14-15 **Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.** Paul, Silas, and Timothy were all in the city, but Paul was the target of the mobs. So the church sent him away alone, with an agreement to meet up with Silas and Timothy in Athens. Luke may have accompanied Paul.

<sup>g</sup> 17:1-15 The priorities of apostolic ministry are apparent in this text. The churches of the New Testament were not seeking to draw crowds, though at times they drew large crowds. They

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were more focused on a watching God than watching the world. It was more important to them to get the gospel right than to make an impressive splash in communities. Paul's testimonies in 2 Corinthians 4 and 1 Thessalonians 2 show what he wanted most.

This text calls the church to ministry that has as its focus God's revelation rather than man's felt needs. The prophet Amos (3:8) said, "A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?" Notice all the ways God moved Paul to handle the Scripture (the Sovereign Lord speaking) in Thessalonica and Berea. Using this model for biblical instruction in the church, we should then:

1. Create a forum of instruction that allows students to ask questions about God's word; "Reasoned"
2. Make sure the primary preaching method is exposition, taking meaning from the text of Scripture and explaining it; "Explaining"
3. Train the people in the discipline of apologetics, defending the Christian faith using Scripture; "Proving"
4. View Bible teaching as a gift instead of a drudgery; "Received... with great eagerness"
5. Develop homes where "Bible study" is not just something to which you go; "Examined"
6. Remain unashamed of the gospel, proclaiming it before the eyes of God instead of trying to dress it up so sinners aren't offended; "Preaching"