***RUNNING FOR GOD AND THE GOSPEL!*** **Text: Acts 17:10-34 Date: 7/5&12/2015 Sunday AM**

Mission work is not for the weak-minded or faint-hearted!

**Last Sunday** we talked about Paul’s missionary effort in Thessalonica.

We saw how he operated and how he was opposed!

Paul was opposed by an assembly of street thugs “street brawlers” “rent a mob”, an assault “attack” on the home of their host Jason!

We also saw God’s answer to this tough situation.

**Acts 17:10 tells us what God did… “**And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.”

**Today** we see Paul and his mission team in Berea. **60 miles from Thessalonica**

Berea was a safe place for Paul ***until*** the Jews from Thessalonica arrived to oppose him.

Praise the Lord!!! HE had answer for Paul’s problem! ***Sovereign safety!***

Let’s dig into Acts 17:10-34…

**IN BEREA – WE SEE *SEARCHING* SAINTS – 17:10-15**

**IN ATHENS – WE SEE *SEEKING* SINNERS – 17:16-34**

1. **IN BEREA – WE SEE *SEARCHING* SAINTS – 17:10-15**

* **Acts 17:10-15** And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they *received* the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched* the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them *believed*; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the Word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. 14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. 15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.
* **17:10 >** The team arrived safely in Berea.
* **17:10 >** Paul and Silas head straight for the Synagogue.
* Their mission compelled them to move forward!
* The power of the MISSION overcame any FEAR that might grip their hearts!
* They knew the Lord would be faithful to His servants!!!
* **Paul testifies to the Lord’s grace in 2 Corinthians 12:9** And HE said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
* **17:11-12 >** The Bereans received the Word of God… their salvation is the fruit of their acceptance of God’s Word!
* **H.A. Ironside** puts this in perspective for us, “A nobility of mind that led them to put away all prejudice and preconceived notions and to examine fairly the matters to which their attention was called, *TESTING EVERYTHING BY SCRIPTURE!”*
* **POINT:** Investing in the study of Scripture *always* pays off!
* **17:11 >** “*received* the Word with all *readiness* of mind” = with all “eagerness” of mind!
* **17:11 >** “*searched* the Scriptures daily” = They examined the Scriptures daily!
* This word *“daily”* is important = regularly and systematically they searched daily “whether those things were so” = **BUT this is Paul… Do we need to search out what PAUL said as well? YES!!!**
* **Paul taught his brothers and sisters this in Ephesians 4:14** That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
* **He adds this in Ephesians 5:10** Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.
* **The Apostle John weighs in as well in 1 John 4:1** Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.
* **Paul was well aware of how Satan hindered the work of the Gospel… look at 2 Corinthians 4:3-4** But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.
* **QUESTION:** How do you evaluate sermons and teachings? The Life Application Study Bible gives us this insight! “The people in Berea searched the Scriptures for themselves to verify the message they heard. Always compare what you hear with what the Bible says. A preacher or teacher who gives God's true message will never contradict or explain away anything that is found in God's Word.”
* **17:12 says >** “Therefore many of them *believed…”*
* **The Amplified Bible describes what happened with the Bereans… Acts 17:11-12** Now these [Jews] were better disposed *and* more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they were entirely ready *and* accepted *and* welcomed the message [concerning the attainment through Christ of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God] with inclination of mind *and* eagerness, searching *and* examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore became believers, together with not a few prominent Greeks, women as well as men.
* **Romans 10:17 speaks to the power of God’s Word as it relates to salvation!** “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
* **In 1 Thessalonians 1:6 Paul tells us more about their conversion,** “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:”
* **1 Thessalonians 1:9 adds this insight,** “For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”
* **17:13-15 >** The Jews from Thessalonica heard that **PAUL** was preaching again… THEY KNEW WHAT HAPPENED WHEN PAUL PREACHED THE GOSPEL!!!
* Looking back we see how the Lord used Paul’s persecution in Acts 8-9 to “scatter” the Apostles and the saints!
* **Acts 8:1 gives us this history,** “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the Apostles.”
* **KEY:** God’s *sovereign safety* was at work!
* Paul was RUNNING FOR GOD AND THE GOSPEL!
* **IN BEREA – WE SEE *SEARCHING* SAINTS – 17:10-15**

1. **IN ATHENS – WE SEE *SEEKING* SINNERS – 17:16-34**

* **Acts 17:16-34** Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. 17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. 18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. 19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, *is*? 20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. 21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) 22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, *Ye* men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30  And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: 31 Because HE hath appointed a day, in the which HE will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom HE hath ordained; *whereof* HE hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that HE hath raised HIM from the dead. 32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*. 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which *was* Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

**Completed 7/12/15-AM**

* Paul’s sees the **CONDITION** of the people in Athens.
* Consider Luke’s description… Acts 17:16 “He (Paul) saw the city *wholly* given to idolatry.” “the city was *full* of idols” “He was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw *everywhere* in the city.”
* Someone has written, “In Athens it was easier to find a god than it was to find a man!”

**THE CONDITION THE CONVERSATION THE CONFLICT THE CONTEMPLATION THE CONVERSION**

* ***Life Application Study Bible says,*** *“*Paul was *"troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city."* The word translated "troubled" means "sudden, violent emotion." *Paul was filled with a combination of anger and grief.* Seeing people spiritually lost, blinded by Satan, and trapped in a pagan culture caused Paul to be in a state of *emotional upheaval*. Though highly educated, the Athenians were ignorant of the one true God. **It's interesting to note that Paul turned his internal turmoil into positive action: he looked for opportunities to share the truth about Jesus.”**

**Bottom line: It broke Paul’s heart!**

* **QUESTION:** Does the lostness of people move you to action? And if so, do you seek opportunities to share the gospel?
* We also see here the **CONVERSATION** Paul had at the Areopagus!
* We also see here **CONFLICT!**
* **17:32 >** “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.” **THE CROWD SPLIT!**
* “Mocked” = “jeered” “made sport of it” “Scoffed” “Some laughed at him and walked off making jokes.”
* **NEXT,** we see the **CONTEMPLATION** of the philosophers and the **CONVERSION** of some of Paul’s hearers! **NOTICE…**
* *17:19 ~ They were* willing *to listen!*

*17:22-23 ~ They were idol worshipers! “very superstitious”*

*17:32 ~ They were* willfully *defiant! “mocked”*

*17:32 ~ Some were willing to wait until another time!*

*17:34 ~* ***SOME*** *wanted to be saved and were!*

* **Ray Pritchard writes,** “Many people have a *‘Mount Rushmore’* religion as a way of covering their bets. When they look up, they see Jesus and Buddha and Mohammed and Moses—and maybe Michael Jordan and Elvis Presley. They figure as long as Jesus is up there somewhere, they’re going to be alright in the end. But they are badly mistaken. *The Lord Jesus Christ will not share His glory with anyone else. He must be worshiped as the one and only way to heaven.”*
* **As we close, notice GOD’S CALL to sinners in Acts 17:30-31** And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: 31 *Because* HE hath appointed a day, in the which HE will judge the world in righteousness by *that* Man whom HE hath ordained; *whereof* HE hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that HE hath raised HIM from the dead.
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