

Sunday Morning Message

November 29, 2015

Be Like the Bereans

Topic – Christian Maturity

Text – Acts 17:1 – 15; 2 Timothy 2:1 – 2, 14 – 16; 3:14 – 17

Congregational Reading – Acts 17:10 – 12

Introduction

A few weeks ago I preached a message entitled, “Building Upon the Basics”, which was on the topic of Christian maturity. In that message I stated that too many Christians were content to stay at a very elementary level of Christian growth, and never move past the foundational truths of the milk of the word. Our text for that message was Hebrews 5:12 – 6:3.

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:12-14)

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.” (Hebrews 6:1-3)

The basic truth behind that message was that too many Christians are spiritual babes, and need to grow up.

This morning, I want to continue to develop that idea, and explain to you why I believe it is that most Christians never mature in the Lord. It is because they do not ever develop a hunger and thirst for the Word of God that will cause them to “*search the scriptures*” or “*study to shew [themselves] approved unto God*”.

This morning, I want to draw your attention to Berea, a city in Macedonia where the gospel was preached by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. The Jews from this city were said to be noble because they were willing to take an in-depth look at the Old Testament Scriptures in order to be able to make an informed judgment regarding what Paul was telling them about the Lord. They “*searched the Scriptures daily*”.

Before we read the passage, let’s look at the context of Paul’s second missionary journey:



Paul and Barnabas started out in Antioch.

They travelled through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches.

Next, they went to Derbe and Lystra, which are in the region known as Galatia.

At Lystra, they picked up Timothy who would travel with them.

They continued through Galatia and Phrygia, and intended to stop in churches in Asia, but were forbidden of the Holy Ghost.

They next went to Mysia, and intended to go northeast into Bythnia, but once again the Holy Spirit closed the door.

They continued travelling westward, and ended up at Troas, where two things happened:

- 1 Paul saw a vision of a man in Macedonia that was calling for help.

2 They met up with Luke, (Acts 16:10) who travelled with them into Macedonia.

They sailed across the Aegean Sea, stopping for the night at the island of Samothracia, and then on to Neapolis. From Neapolis they travelled inland to Philippi, which was “the chief city” of that part of Macedonia.

There they went to a prayer meeting, and preached the gospel to Lydia, a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira. She was gloriously saved along with the rest of her household, and Paul had the privilege of baptizing her whole family. Paul and his companions lodged with Lydia.

Next, we find Paul incarcerated in the jail at Philippi because he had cast a devil out of a woman that was “possessed with a spirit of divination”. She was a “soothsayer”, or fortuneteller that had made some businessmen in town a lot of money. They trumped up charges against Paul and Silas, and had them thrown into the jail.

After being beaten, and while being incarcerated, an earthquake occurred which opened all of the doors of the prison. However, neither Paul nor any of the other prisoners attempted to escape. The jailor was so moved by the testimony of these men that he also trusted Christ as His savior; and he, along with his household were also baptized.

That brings us to Acts 17:1

Notice what happened at Berea, which according to Paul was very noble:

I They Received the Word of God

These Bereans were eager to learn. They were hungry for the Word of God. They were opened-minded. They were teachable.

*"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."
(Matthew 5:6)*

Illustration – When I first got saved, I was hungry.

Illustration – School of the Scriptures was packed out with hungry people.

Perhaps you and I have lost our hunger for the nourishing Word of God because we are feeding too much on the junk food of the world.

David said this:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of

water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Psalm 1:1-6)

II They Searched the Scriptures Daily

This means that they checked out the doctrine that Paul was teaching them about Christ to see if it agreed with their Old Testament. They thoroughly studied what the Old Testament said about their Messiah to see if what Paul was saying was true.

We need to become students of the Word.

We need to be in the Scriptures daily. It doesn't say weekly. It says daily. Every day.

Turn to 2 Timothy 2:1 - 2; 14 - 16; 3:14 - 17

Practical Thoughts

1 Study Devotionally

By this I mean that you should read the Scripture daily looking for a nugget of truth that will help you be what God wants you to be.

Illustrate - In Bible college we had to complete Walking with God sheets, and keep a Walking with God journal. Everyday we had to read a portion of Scripture devotionally, and look for something within the Scripture that God was trying to teach us. Some of these thoughts from the Scripture became the seed thoughts for messages that we would develop later on.

Meditate upon the thought throughout the day, and look for ways to apply that truth to your life.

Strive to read the Bible through at least once per year.

[Explain the morning blog]

Illustration - Writer Amos Wells reflected our need for thorough Bible study in this poem:

I supposed I knew my Bible,
Reading peacemeal, hit or miss,
Now a bit of John or Matthew,

Now a snatch of Genesis,
Certain chapters of Isaiah,
Certain Psalms (the twenty-third),
Twelfth of Romans, first of Proverbs --
Yes, I thought I knew the Word!
But I found that thorough reading
Was a different thing to do,
And the way was unfamiliar
When I read the Bible through.
You who like to play at Bible,
Dip and dabble, here and there,
Just before you kneel, aweary,
And yawn through a hurried prayer;
You who treat the Crown of Writings
As you treat no other book,
Just a paragraph, disjointed,
Just a crude, impatient look,
Try a worthier procedure,
Try a broad and steady view;
You will kneel in very rapture
When you read the Bible through.

(Paul Borthwick, Leading the Way by Navpress, 1989, p. 139.)

2 Study Topically

By this, I mean that you can look for many verses from throughout the Bible that all teach about the same subject or topic. This may be a topic that you are interested in, or it may be something that you are dealing with in life – perhaps a problem you are struggling with, and you are trying to learn all that God has to say about it.

Illustrate – In Bible college we had to organize all of the verses in Proverbs according to topics.

3 Study Expositorily

This was very helpful to me as a young Christian and continues to help me today. Take a Book of the Bible that you are interested in and study it verse by verse. Get a good Study Bible, a concordance, and perhaps a few commentaries to help you. There are many online study helps with powerful search engines, such as E-Sword and Blue Letter Bible. Be

careful to remember though that only the Scripture itself is infallible. Anything written by men will have its problems.

Illustration – Martin Luther

I study my Bible like I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest may fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf. I search the Bible as a whole like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb--study book after book. Then I shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters. Then I shake every twig, or a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and their meanings.

4 Study Corporately

Our Sunday School program, and our Wednesday evening service are in a Bible Study format. We are either studying a topic or we are doing a verse by verse study through the Bible.

I am pleased to announce that in January of 2016, we will be starting the Berean Bible Institute Sunday School Class, which will hopefully evolve into more classes throughout the week geared to help our church learn the Bible through an in-depth study. We will begin with a 26 week class called *Looking Unto Jesus* studying the Book of Hebrews.

III They Faced Opposition

The devil does not want you to study the Bible, and he will use any means necessary to get you to stop.

He will use people to discourage you.

He will use pleasures to distract you.

He will use problems to depress you.

Don't let him. The more Bible that you learn and apply to your life, the more faith you will have, and the stronger you will be spiritually.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

Conclusion

We need more Bible Bereans who will: "[receive] the word with all readiness of mind, and [search] the scriptures daily; and will be able to keep at no matter what oppositions may arise.