

Church Growth in Stiff Opposition

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[0:00] Acts chapter 16 and verse 40. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them.

! Then they left. When they had passed through Amphilius and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead.

This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ, he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

But the Jews were jealous, so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.

But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting, These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house.

[1:17] They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus. When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil.

Then they made Jason and the others postpone and let them go. As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men. When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up.

The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. The men who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

[2:25] What kept this man Paul going? Stoned and left for dead. Dragged out of the city.

And yet he picks himself up and moves on to the next city. Beaten with rods. Persecuted. Wherever he went, and yet he's up and he's going again. What was it? Well, just this, that there was hell to pay for his sins. And he had learned that Jesus Christ had paid that penalty for him. And had trusted in him. And therefore was forgiven all of his sins. And there are other sinners out there who have hell to pay for their sins.

And I have this good news. That whoever believes in him should not perish. But have everlasting life. And so he gets up. And he goes again.

[3:25] And gets up. And goes again. And that's what we have here this morning in Acts chapter 17. With bruised and beaten backs, Paul and Silas leave the new believers behind at Philippi.

And head for Thessalonica. About a hundred miles to the southwest. If we could just show that on the map. So they were in Philippi. And they're heading down to Thessalonica.

They would have traveled a day's journey. And spent the night in Amphipolis. And another day's journey to Apollonia. And on the next day would have reached Thessalonica.

And Timothy and Luke are with them. Now Thessalonica was the capital city of Macedonia. It was found on a main highway called the Ignatian Way.

A strategic city. A center of trade. And so it was chosen as the next city for intensive evangelism by Paul and his team. And they found a Jewish synagogue there.

[4:26] In the midst of what was an otherwise idolatrous pagan city. By now we're familiar with Paul's custom. His manner of working.

It was to go first to the synagogue. They were in deep into pagan territory by now. In the second missionary journey.

Where there were no believers in Jesus Christ. Absolutely none. Where people had never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. But at least at the synagogue.

The Old Testament scriptures were read each Sabbath day. And since the Old Testament scriptures pointed to the coming of Christ. Paul would go there first.

And prove from their own scriptures. That Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. Well for three consecutive Sabbath days.

[5:21] He reasoned with them from the scriptures. Notice that word reasoned. That's the use of the mind. Christian worship is not checking the mind at the door when you come in.

Some eastern mystical religions would do so. But not Christianity. Christianity is about facts. About reasons. About historical events that really took place.

And about things that you will need to think about. So that's why when we come to worship. We put on our thinking caps. And we ask God to enable us to love him with all of our minds now.

And why we get to bed at a decent hour on Saturday night. So that our minds will be ready. To reason. To think. And to follow God's thought in the scriptures.

Well. The specific topic that Paul set before their minds. Were the scriptures. That taught specifically about Messiah.

[6:19] Suffering. And dying. And rising to life. That he must. Not he might. But he must. Suffer. And die. And be raised to life. That was always the stumbling block to the Jews.

A crucified Messiah. A Messiah who suffers and dies. Impossible. Infathomable. Unfathomable. They expected a Messiah who would be strong and mighty.

A conqueror in battle. To destroy the Romans. And to set them free. And to restore physical blessing to the land. But Paul could turn to passage after passage.

Of their own Old Testament scriptures. And prove to them. That the Christ. The Messiah. Must die. Must suffer. And he had no trouble finding such passages.

Just take Isaiah 53 for example. It spoke of the suffering servant of the Lord. Who was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows familiar with suffering.

[7:23] Who would be pierced and crushed. And wounded. Oppressed and afflicted. For the sins of others. That it was the Lord's own will. Jehovah's will. To crush him.

And to cause him to suffer. And that by the suffering of his soul. He would justify many. By bearing their sins. That he would pour out his life unto death.

That he was assigned a grave. With the wicked. And with the rich. In his death. Yes. He must die. And that after the suffering of his soul.

He will see the light of life. And be satisfied. Being raised from the dead. You see. That's just Psalm 53. Or Isaiah 53. Psalm 22. Is a graphic portrayal.

Of the crucifixion of this Messiah. Who would cry. My God. My God. Why have you forsaken me? It's there in Psalm 22. Scorn. Despised.

[8:18] Mocked. And insulted by the people. The very words. That they will use to mock him. Are recorded in Psalm 22. I count all my bones. People stare. And gloat over me.

All my bones. Are out of joint. My tongue. Sticks to the roof of my mouth. Speaking there. Of his deadly thirst. Of which he cried. From the cross. They pierce my hands.

And my feet. They divide my garments. Among them. And cast lots. For my clothes. This is not the gospels. This is Psalm 22. Which was found.

In the Jewish synagogue. In their scrolls. And so the Old Testament. Scriptures. Made it plain. That Messiah must suffer. And die. And be raised from the dead.

But the rabbis. Overlooked such passages. That just didn't fit. With their view. Of the Messiah. And so they explained. Those passages. In other ways. And Paul brings forth.

[9:13] These scriptures. And then right alongside them. He explains. What had happened to Jesus. So that they could see. What was foretold. Of the Messiah.

And what happened. To Jesus of Nazareth. In Jerusalem. And his punchline. His conclusion. Is simply. That this Jesus.

I am proclaiming. To you. Is the Messiah. Who has been foretold. He and no one else. Fulfills all that your own scriptures.

Say about him. And so the scriptures. The reasoning. The explanation. The proofs. It was compelling. And some of the Jews. Were convinced. And believed on Christ.

But most. Of the new converts. At the synagogue. Were God fearing Gentiles. Who attended the Jewish synagogue. Not a few prominent women. Which we'll see. Happens as well.

[10:09] In the city of Berea. Probably wives. Of the leading citizens. Or even possibly. Women holding important positions. In the city themselves. And so there was this popular movement.

Toward. The teaching. Of Paul and Silas. Well that's more than. The unbelieving Jewish leaders. Could stomach. They were jealous. They grew jealous.

They had rejected Paul and Silas. His preaching. And conclusions. That Jesus is the Messiah. Of course that would make. Them guilty. Of the. The sin.

Of murdering. The son of God. And so that was definitely. Out of the question. But many in their own synagogue. And in the city. Were believing.

And they now. Are jealous. They couldn't answer. The careful arguments. From scripture. Nor the historical facts. Of what happened. To Jesus of Nazareth. There it is. So instead.

[11:05] They devised. A devious plot. They rounded up. Some bad characters. From the marketplace. These would have been. Those fellows. That had nothing to do. They weren't working.

They're just sitting. Around the marketplace. The King James Version. Says certain lewd. Fellows of the baser sort. You get the idea. Of what kind of characters.

These were. Every city has them. Not hard to find them. The up to no good. Thugs. Of the town. And though they were unemployed. These Jewish leaders.

Had work for them. And work that they no doubt. Paid them for. They formed them into a mob. They started a riot. In the city. And when it got the attention.

Of the city officials. They blamed the riot. On Paul and Silas. These are the troublemakers. Yes.

This was the work. Of the rabbis. And the rabble. Rousers.

[11:59] As they. Were opposing. The gospel. Of Jesus Christ. So they rushed. To Jason's house. Where Paul and Silas. Had been staying. But they had already. Hidden.

Paul and Silas. Elsewhere. Not wanting. To come up. And empty handed. The officials. Or the. The mob. Dragged Jason. And some of the other brothers.

Before the city officials. And they charged them. With the serious charge. Of harboring. Political agitators. Men who have caused trouble. All over the world. Now they brought their trouble here. To Thessalonica. These Christians. They all defy. Caesar's decrees. Saying there's another king. We only obey. King Jesus laws. Not Caesar's laws.

And so they paint them. As revolutionaries. Rebelling against Caesar. Undermining Roman law. And of course. There's nothing new here. This is just a page. Out of the book.

[12:53] Of the Sanhedrin. Who when they brought Jesus. To the Roman governor. Pilate. Used the same tactics. The same charges. Against our Lord.

We found this man. Subverting our nation. He opposes payment. Of taxes to Caesar. And claims to be. Christ. A king. He stirs up the people.

All over Judea. By his teaching. And he's come all the way here. Inciting the people. To rebellion. How far from the truth. It was. You remember. Our Lord said. Give to Caesar.

What is Caesar's. And to God. What is God's. Give to God. What is God's. Far from the truth. He charged us. To obey every ordinance.

Of man. For the Lord's sake. So. The charge of treason. Though. Was a sure way. To whip up a crowd. A sure way. To get the attention. Of the city officials. And it worked.

[13:49] It worked. But Paul and Silas. Were not there. To be tried and punished. So. All they could do. Was make Jason. And the other brothers. Post bond. And then they let them go. That bond.

Was probably. A financial guarantee. That you will not. Have any more trouble. From the Christians. Here in Thessalonica. And so during the night. The danger was so great.

That during the night. They immediately hurried. Paul and Silas. Out of town. Sending them. Sixty miles. Southwest. To the city of Berea.

Again. Tim. If we could have that. So. They're chased. Out of Thessalonica. And they come down. Sixty miles. To Berea. Now before we. Turn there.

In our thoughts. I want to pause. For just a. A couple lessons. From Thessalonica. First of all. As we've seen. Over and over. In Acts. We learned the lesson.

[14:43] That persecution. Cannot stop the growth. Of Christ's church. Persecution. There is. But it does not. Stop the growth. Of Christ's church. They succeeded.

In running. Paul and Silas. Out of town. But they could not. Thwart the work. Of the gospel. And the building. Up of Christ's church. Just several months.

Later. Paul will. Write. The first. Of two letters. That he sends. To this church. We have them. In our new testament. The letters. To the.

Thessalonians. And that letter. Sheds a whole lot. More light. Upon this first visit. That we just read about. There's a lot more. Said. In. In first. Thessalonians.

If you want to follow. You can. But I'm going to just. Read some of the passages. In first.

Thessalonians. In chapter 2. And verses 1 and 2. He says to them. Again. Just months later.

[15:36] Writing back. To the Thessalonians. You know. Brothers. That our visit to you. Was not. In vain. You know. It wasn't in vain. You know. It was not a failure.

Now. It looked like a failure. To many. Perhaps. Because. They got run out of town. On a rail.

They're no longer there. But. But Paul says. It was not. In vain. We had previously.

Suffered. And been insulted. In Philippi. As you know. But with the help of our God. We dared to tell you. His gospel. In spite of strong opposition. From the get go. There was strong opposition.

Against him. But they dared. They risked their lives. To. Tell them. The saving gospel. And God smiled on it. And brought many to faith.

In Jesus Christ. And he says. He writes further. In chapter 1. In verse 5 and 6. Our gospel came to you. Not simply with words. You know. That's how most people. Hear the gospel.

[16:31] It's just. Only so much words. So many words. Coming out of someone's mouth. And bouncing in their ears. That's all. Paul says. When we came to Thessalonica. Our gospel came to you.

Not simply with word. But with a ramrod. Of power. Of the Holy Spirit. And deep conviction. In spite of severe suffering.

You welcomed the message. With the joy given by the Holy Spirit. Spirit. This is why our. Our. Our. Our visit to you. Was not in vain. Of course. It's in vain.

Without the spirit. All is vain. Unless the. Spirit of the Holy One. Come down. But he did come. And he attended his word. With power. That penetrated.

Their dark unbelief. So that Paul can say. In chapter 2. In verse 13. When you received the word of God. Which you heard from us. You accepted it. Not as the word of man. But as it is in truth.

[17:28] The word of God. Which is at work in you. Who believe. So when some heard it. They heard it. As. The words of man.

They said. This message doesn't. Agree with Rabbi. So and so. And so they dismissed it. As the word of man. One man. Against other men. But that's not how it came to you.

Dear ones. He can write to the church. At Thessalonica. It came to you. With divine authority. With deep conviction. That this was not the word of man. But the word of God. And God's word.

Always trumps man's word. Be it Rabbi. King. Mother. Father. Whoever. It came with power. And it convinced them. That Jesus is the Messiah.

And they put their trust. In him. And the gospel didn't end with you. Paul says. In chapter one. In verse eight. He said. The Lord's message. Rang out from you.

[18:26] Not only in Macedonia. Of which you are the capital city. But also. In Achaia. For your faith in God. Has become known. Everywhere.

In other words. These believers. At Thessalonica. Became sounding boards. Sounding boards.

They used to have them. Over the pulpits. Before they invented. These things.

And. And the preacher's voice. Would bounce. Off of that board. And project out. To the audience. Don't let.

The gospel. Find a grave. In you. But let it. Find a sounding board. To bounce. Off of you. To other needy. Sinners. That's what had happened.

Here in Thessalonica. Yes. They persecuted. Paul and Silas. Drove them out of the city. But these believers. Sounded forth. The gospel. Such that.

[19:22] Paul says. We don't even have to tell. About your faith. Because everywhere we go. We're hearing about it. From others. They tell us. Chapter one. And verses nine. And ten. They tell us.

How you turn to God. From idols. To serve the living. And true God. And to wait for his son. From heaven. Whom he raised from the dead. Even Jesus. Who delivers us.

From the coming wrath. That brings us. To the second lesson. From Thessalonica. Not only that persecution. Cannot stop. The growth of Christ's church.

But we see here. Secondly. That conversion. Is a change of direction. In life. It's a whole different orientation. A change of direction. He says.

As you turn. To God. From idols. So. So how are we born. In this world. We come in. With our backs. Toward God.

[20:14] And our face. Toward. Our idols. Our God substitutes. Be it self. Sin. Other people. Money. Position. Power. All the things. That people live for.

Besides God. And so that's how we came. Into the world. And we started to live. And we continue to live. And many live and die. Oriented. In the direction.

Of their idols. And. Paul says. When the word of God. Came to you. It had a powerful effect. What did it do to you? It. It. It converted you.

And what is conversion? It's a change in direction. You turn from idols. That's repentance. You repudiated. You disowned. That whole way of life.

You said. I'm done with it. And you turn from it. That's repentance. And you turn to God. That's faith. You have a new master now. And. And you put faith.

[21:09] In Jesus Christ. And you love him. And. You did this. This turning. To what end? That you might serve. The living. And true God. What a trade.

Instead of serving. Dead idols. Worthless God substitutes. You're now serving. The living God. You're living for him. You're asking. What does he want?

And. And you're living. To please him. You have a God word. Orientation. Toward life. A Christ word. Orientation. Such that you are waiting.

For him. As he says. You are now. Waiting for his son. From heaven. Whom he raised. From the dead. Jesus. Who delivers us. From the coming wrath.

Remember I asked. What is it that keeps this. Paul ticking. Keeps him going. He knows there's a coming wrath. There is hell to pay for sin. And Jesus is the only one.

[22:08] Who delivers us. From that coming wrath. I hear some people say. Well I don't. I don't need the Lord. I'm getting along. Just quite fine. Well that might be. But what will you do.

Before the coming wrath. There were a lot of people. In Noah's days. Who were able to get on. Without. Pitching in with the ark. They got on fine. But. But. But what will you do.

When it starts to rain. And the fountains. Of the deep. Break up. And the. The heavens are opened. And what will you do then. That's. That's Paul. We have Jesus. Who saves us.

From the coming wrath. And that's the orientation. Of the. The believer. They have turned. From their idols. To God. To serve the living. And true God. And to wait for Jesus.

The one who will save us. From. The wrath to come. You see. Conversion is a change. Of direction. In life. Which way are you pointed. This morning.

[23:03] Are you. You pointed. Toward yourself. And sin. And Satan. And all the idols. Of this world. Or. Or have you. Been converted. And turned. From them. To the living God.

In Jesus Christ. Well. No wonder. Their faith. Was sounded forth. Out into. To the. To everywhere. People were talking. About this. Who's ever heard. Of a.

Of a nation. Changing their gods. Jeremiah asks. That just doesn't happen. But these were converted. From the idols. That their parents. And grandparents.

And great grandparents. Had served for centuries. They had turned away. From them. To the living God. In Jesus Christ. Well.

That's Thessalonica. We come then. To Berea. Hustled out of town. At night. They come into Berea. Some 50. 60 miles away. Where it was much.

[23:57] The same story. Again. It's first to the Jewish synagogue. And again. We'll see suffering. Persecution. From the Jews. But there's one great difference. Between the Jews.

In. In Berea. From the Jews. In Thessalonica. And Luke. Is careful. To draw our attention to it. Verse 11.

The Bereans. Were more noble. They were wiser. Than. The Thessalonians. And that in two special ways. First. Their great eagerness.

To receive the message. And secondly. Careful examination. Of the scriptures. They were more noble. Than the Jews. Back in Thessalonica.

Why? Because first of all. Of their great eagerness. To receive the message. They received the message. With great eagerness. In other words. They were all ears.

[24 : 51] They were. They were turning their ear. Towards. The messenger. Not away from. In. Prejudice. Against. The gospel. They were not.

Close minded. To all thoughts. That were new to them. Jesus. Of Nazareth. The Messiah. They did not.

Close themselves. Off to that. But were. Eager. To hear. This message. If it's not.

What I've. Heard before. I won't even. Consider it. No. That's not how. They were. They were not. Slaves. To the status quo. They were not. Slaves. To their traditions. They were not.

Indifferent. To Paul's message. I just don't. Care. About these things. Yawn. Yawn. No. They were eager. Eager. Great.

[25 : 49] Eagerness. To receive. The message. You see. Because Paul. Wasn't just. Splitting hairs. Over some. Obscure doctrines. Of no practical. Value.

How many. Angels. Can you stack. On the end. Of one. Pin. Head. No. He spoke. About the most. Important. Things. In life. How to be right. With God. How to be rescued.

From this coming. Wrath. That will face. Every one of us. How to know. Jesus Christ. And eternal life. Through him.

And so. To hear. Paul preach. Was to be. Immediately. Confronted. With life. And death. Matters. And when they heard him. They eagerly embarked. On the pursuit. Of truth. And that. Brings us. To the second point. Because though they were eager. They were not gullible. And that's the combination. We want. We want to be eager. But not gullible. Just to swallow. Any truth. That comes along. And so.

[26 : 44] The second thing. That may. Mark them out. As more noble. Was their careful examination. Of the scriptures. Others. So Paul. Has claimed. Here in our. In our hearing.

That the book of Isaiah. Speaks about the sufferings. Of the servant of the Lord. And about his death. And resurrection. They receive that message. With great eagerness. But then.

They opened the synagogue scrolls. And started looking. For Isaiah. 53. They wanted to see. With their own eyeballs.

Is it in the text. Is it in the Bible. They would not. Just take. This traveling preacher. At his word. Because they weren't.

Just hungry. For anything. They were hungry. For the truth. The truth. Of God. In other words. They were fact. Checkers. Now. We're in the political season.

[27 : 41] And you know. That our politicians. Tell us. Anything that we want. To hear. And often. Far. From. The truth. And if they say it.

Loud enough. And long enough. And convincingly enough. It passes. For truth. And everyone. Starts to think. Well that's certainly true. But you know. There are these nasty. Fact checkers. After the debates.

Aren't there. And they say. Okay. Was this statement true. And they go to the facts. And then they place. Alongside of what was said. What really happened. And what was really said.

And then you can see. The facts. Sadly. Men don't even care anymore. What the facts are. Their minds are made up. And they believe. What they want to believe. The Bereans.

Were of a more noble. Character. Than that. They were after truth. Truth. And nothing but the truth. Let everything else. Be burned up. We want the truth. We want the word of God.

[28 : 36] And it's the pursuit of truth. That takes them. To this book. This is truth. Your word. Is truth. John. 17. 17.

The word of the Lord. Is right and true. Psalm 33. 4. So they weren't going to hang. Their eternal salvation. This. This. This wrath of God. Is coming. They weren't going to hang.

Their eternal salvation. On some rabbi. Or some traveling preacher. Named Paul. They wanted to see it. In God's own word. After all. They would not be judged. For what they did.

With rabbi's word. Or what they did. With Paul's word. But they will be judged. For what they did.

With God's word. Even as you will be judged. One day. Not for what you did.

With my word. Your parents word. Your Sunday school. What you did. With God's word. That. Very word. Will judge you. In the last day.

[29:31] Jesus says. So these Bereans. Oh. They. They're after truth. Everything must be checked. By the scriptures. To see. If it's true. And this is the.

Only standard. We have. For the truth. This is the bottom line. Standard. This is the. The last voice. In any. Discussion. Of truth.

The Bible. Not what I think. What you. Or anyone else. Think. This. But what God says. And so. Isaiah 8. 20. Says. To the law. And to the testimony. If they do not speak.

According to this word. There's no light of dawn. In them. So are you engaged. In the continual pursuit. Of truth. Are you after the truth.

Are you. Want to live. For something. That's real. That's genuine. That's the idea. Of truth. It's. It's the real thing. The Bible. Defines. Reality. Are you after.

[30:26] The real thing. The real world. What's. The real. Future. Are you. Or are you just. Content. To live. In a fog. Well. If you are. Pursuing. The truth. Has your.

Pursuit. Brought you. To daily. Search. The scriptures. As the. Bereans. Did. Would anyone. Following you. Around. For one week.

Come to the end. Of that week. And conclude. That. This. Woman. Has. A. Thirst. And. Eagerness. For the word. Of God. That's the conclusion.

No other way. To explain her. She's. Hungering. And thirsting. For the Bible. Do you come. To the Bible. As a starving man. Comes to a dinner table.

Eager to hear it. Are you. Hungering. And thirsting. For. God's word. And if not. What candy. Of the world. Is spoiling. Your appetite. What are you. Giving your minds.

[31:21] To. That you don't. Have this. Eagerness. For that. Which is. Of. Greatest. Importance. Of all. What God. Is saying. To us. In his word. The problem.

Today. Is that. Few. Professing. Christians. Care enough. About the truth. To daily. Examine. The scriptures. It's just not. That important. To them. If once a week. They hear.

What the preacher. Says. That's enough. For them. But anyone. Who swallows. The truth. Without examining. The scripture. Is a sitting duck. For the next person. Who will come. And teach.

And maybe the next person. Will be teaching error. You know. That the cults. Have their greatest. Success. Not with. Raw pagans. Who don't believe anything.

In the bible. No. They have the greatest success. With church people. Church people. Who are satisfied. With a little. Second hand knowledge.

[32:16] Of the bible. With what they've heard. From others. About the bible. And that's why. They're so easily. Led astray. Okay. You've seen.

Some of the. Surveys. That are done. And. And the. The ignorance. Of the bible. Among professing. Christians. They can only name. Maybe. Two.

Out of the. Twelve. Disciples. Names. Now that won't. Harm you. If that's the case. I think it's indicative. Of a. Of a lack of. Knowledge. Of the bible.

But. You won't lose. Your soul. For that. But. But then they can only. Name about. Two or three. Of the. Ten commandments. And. That's far more serious. Because you're going to be judged.

By those words. One day. I don't know that there's. Ever been a time. There's greater biblical. Illiteracy. In the church. Of Jesus Christ. Than what we see.

[33:09] In the professing church. Today. In the United States. And if you don't have. The knowledge of the bible. You. Are.

Unarmed. With discernment. How do you discern. Truth from error. How do you know. Fact from fiction. How do you know. False prophecies. Versus truth.

True prophecies. The word of God. Versus the word of man. You. You just. You can't go there. You don't have the. Information. You don't have the tools. That come from.

Knowledge of God's word. Nearly every. New Testament. New Testament. Epistle. Warns. Against false. Teachers.

And false. Teachings. You would think. That's a real danger. If ever. Nearly every. Epistle. Writes so. Much. About it. And the Lord.

[34:04] Jesus. Himself. Said that before. He returns. There will be a great. Apostasy. A great. Turning away. From the faith. Many will turn away. From the faith. And many.

False prophets. Will appear. And will deceive. Many people. It will be a powerful. Delusion. That leads them astray. And because they did not. Receive the truth. And the love. Of it. They will believe. The lie. And so. All will be condemned. Condemned. Who did not believe. The truth. Do you see. What the enemy. Is doing today.

We are not. Ignorant. Of his devices. He's doing. What the Philistines. Did to the Israelites. Several thousand years ago. You remember when the. The.

The Israelites. Were living under the heel. Of the Philistines. What did they do? They took away. All their. Weapons. So that in the day. Of battle. There were no weapons.

[34 : 59] To be found in Israel. Well. That's stacking the deck. Against them. Isn't it? When you're fighting. Against weapons. And you've got a shovel. Many citizens.

In our land. Are concerned. About the efforts. Of some. To disarm. The American citizen. There's a far worse. Disarmament. Happening. Right under our noses.

The enemy. Of Christ's church. Is disarming. His church. From the sword. Of the spirit. Which is the word of God. No. Not by banning.

And burning Bibles. We have oodles of them. But by distracting people. From reading their Bible. Studying their Bible. Searching the scriptures. Loving the scriptures.

And he has taken the sword. Out of the hands. Of the church. Dear ones. Let's be more noble than that. Let's be more wise. More alert. To what the enemy is doing.

[35 : 57] Why will there be. Such a great apostasy. In turning away. From the faith. At the end. Because they won't have the weapons. To discern truth from error. And to fight. The good fight. Of faith.

The only safe course. Is to be. According to Peter. Is to be growing daily. In the grace. And knowledge. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. To be growing. In the knowledge. Of our Lord Jesus.

Do you know the Bible. Better today. Than you did a month ago. Than a year ago. Are you progressing. In the knowledge. Of truth. From God's word. Instruct a wise man.

And he'll be wiser still. Are you adding. To your knowledge. Waiting daily. At wisdom's doors. Let's all seek. To be daily students. Of the Bible. All of our lives.

And I set before you. This Berean challenge. To swallow. No teaching. No matter who says it. Or how right it sounds. Unless you're convinced.

[36 : 53] From the scriptures. Concerning it. That's the Bereans. The commentator. Robertson. Of the last century. Praises the Scots.

For listening. To preaching. With their Bibles. Open on their laps. He calls it. A fine habit. Worth following. Some churches. Have even taken the name.

Bereans. Haven't they. And put it into their name. The Berean. Baptist church. Or Bible church. The Bereans. Well. The important thing. Is that we have the heart. Of the Bereans.

The heart. Of the Bereans. Let's all take their example. Of great eagerness. And careful. Daily examination. Of the scriptures. If they did so. With. Only the synagogue. Scrolls.

[37 : 49] What will our excuse be. With so many Bibles. In our homes. Well the result. What happens. When. When people.

When people. Hungry for truth. Come to the scriptures. To check. Out the truth. Well. The result. Was that many of the Jews. Believed. They saw it. Yes. God gave them faith.

To see. And they. They embrace. This truth. As did also. A great number. A number. Of prominent. Greek women. And many. Many Greek men. It's.

This. This. This stresses. The. The. The clarity. Of the scriptures. The clearness. Of the scriptures. There are. Some things. In the Bible. That are difficult.

To understand. Peter says that. About some of the things. That Paul wrote. But you know. That the most important. Things. Are sufficiently.

[38 : 41] Clear. To come to the knowledge. Of. If you really. Want to find out. And that's. What this shows. Is. They wanted to know. The truth. They went to the Bible.

And they were persuaded. The Bible. Is not a book. That. Can only be interpreted. By a few elite scholars. You know. What happens. When we.

When we. Say. Oh. We need this. Hierarchy. Of priests. Or. Or scholars. To interpret the Bible. And to tell us. What it means. We put our souls. In the hands of another.

No. God. Intent. God made the Bible. Simple enough. For ordinary people. To read it. And by a due diligence. Seeking to understand it.

We can come to the knowledge. Of the truth. That's what happened here. In Berea. Ordinary people. Searching the scriptures. Came to the truth.
[39 : 37] So. Search the scriptures. Read for your life. It is your life. With which you're dealing. The Bible is sufficiently clear. To. To discover.

All that we need. To know. For life. And godliness. They're clear enough. To lead you. To faith in Jesus Christ. To be saved. From the coming wrath. It's man's prejudice. Against Jesus. That blinds us. To the truth. The problem is with us. Not with the clarity. Of the scriptures. So we pray. Open my eyes. That I may see. Well. The unbelieving Jews.

Back. In Thessalonica. Okay. We're 60 miles. Back. Here in Thessalonica. And it took some time. But. You had people going up the. The road there. And they.

They said. Oh. You know where Paul and Silas are. They're down there at Berea. And they're preaching the word of God. There. Well. They were not satisfied.

[40 : 31] Merely to oppose the truth of Jesus. In Thessalonica. Now they export their persecution. Down to Berea. Agitating the crowds. And stirring them up.

They had their tactics down pat. They were good at what they did. And so they repeat. In Berea. What they had done in Thessalonica. Now it was Paul. Especially that.

That was the lightning rod. Of the opposition. They wanted him dead. He was the chief spokesman. And so. The brothers immediately. Sent him down to the coast. And then escorted him to Athens. So. They got Paul out of town. And eventually. We'll see him showing up. Down in Athens. Again. Driven by persecution. But one more lesson.

Before we leave Berea. And it has to do with this. Opposition of the Jews. To the. To the Savior. And his saving message. Listen to what Paul says.

[41 : 28] In his first letter. To the Thessalonians. About the Jews. He says in chapter 2. In verses 15 and 16. They killed the Lord Jesus. And the prophets. And also drove us out.

They displease God. And are hostile to all men. In their effort. To keep us. From speaking to the Gentiles. So that they may be saved. In this way. They always heap up their sins.

To the limit. The wrath of God. Has come upon them. At last. Now this is no anti-Semitism. From Paul. Paul is a Jew. He wept. For the salvation.

Of his countrymen. He shed blood. For the salvation. Of his countrymen. Taking the gospel to. It's. It's. Just the truth. That Paul could not.

Avoid. That he saw over. And over again. The hostility. Of the Jews. Against the gospel message. They not only.

[42 : 26] Rejected it themselves. But they were hostile. To all men. In their efforts. To keep us. From speaking. To the Gentiles. So that they may be saved.

Now the Lord Jesus. Said the same. To the Jewish leaders. Of his day. In Matthew 23. He said. Woe to you. Teachers of the law. And Pharisees. You hypocrites. You shut. The kingdom. Of heaven. In men's faces. You yourselves. Do not enter. Nor will you let. Those enter. Who are trying to. Woe to you. You travel. Over land.

And sea. To win a convert. A single convert. And when he becomes. One of your converts. You make him twice. As much. A son of hell. As you are. That's Jesus.

You see. Jesus says. The same thing. Paul is now. Saying the same thing. They. They travel. All the way. From. Berea.

[43 : 20] Or from. From Thessalonica. Down to Berea. To make a convert. To keep people from Jesus. Hearing the gospel. Now. Just as I began. This message. By asking. What would make.

The apostle Paul. So zealous. To get up. After being stoned. And left for dead. And beaten with rods. And all the rest. He went through. What would make him. Get up and go.

Get up and go. I want to ask. What would make those. Jewish leaders. Get up and go. I mean. Don't they have something. To do in life. I mean. Just. Just. Enjoyable things. That they would spend.

Their time. Traveling. To persecute. Christians. What. What is this. It's not. Normal. I mean. It just doesn't. Seem right.

Well. What we need to realize. Is that. Behind the Jews. Stirring up. Of persecution. Is someone else. With a stir stick. Of his own.

[44 : 17] Stirring up the Jews. To stir up. The Gentiles. To reject. The gospel. Of Jesus. It's Satan. And his hellish crew.

Of demons. The spiritual forces. Of evil. In high places. Doing all they can. To shut the door. To heaven. In men's faces. To keep the gospel. From people.

Lest they should be saved. And dear. Unconverted friend. Listen to me. Do you see. What Satan. Is doing. Do you understand.

The issues. Of life. What is going on. There are. Spiritual forces. Of evil. That want you. Damned. Forever. Because. Every soul. That is saved. And brought.

Into the kingdom. Of Jesus. Is a soul. Taken from the kingdom. Of darkness. And he does not. Want to lose one. And that's why. He labors.

[45 : 11] To keep the gospel. From coming to you. And when it comes. To you. Labors with your mind. To keep it anywhere. But concerning. About the most important. Matter of being right.

With God. That's why. He's distracting you. Working overtime. To keep you busy. Here and there. With everything. But the gospel. With everything. But Jesus. Because if you come.

To Christ. He will lose you. What a diabolical. Pleasure. He wants you. To lose with him. Forever. And ever.

And ever. He's a loser. He wants you. To lose. Oh. What a savior. We have. That has a people. Whose love. Christ's love.

For them. Compels them. To no longer. Live for themselves. But to go. With this gospel. Convinced. To the coming. Wrath. And to bring. The gospel. Let's come to you again.

[46 : 05] Today. Trust in this Jesus. If you don't come. Others will. Because the Lord Jesus. Will build his church. The gates of hell. Will not prevail against it.

They will oppose it. But they'll not be able. To prevail. So even in Thessalonica. And Berea. Even in communistic. China. And materialistic. Bremen. Jesus Christ. Is calling.

Out his church. One sinner. At a time. Who are turning to him. From their idols. Dear believers. This is the greatest thing. That Jesus is doing.

In the universe today. He is saving sinners. Building his church. And he's called us. To be up and doing. With him. What a privilege. How much of your life.

Is given. To working with Jesus. At building the church. I should ask. What the legitimacy. Of much of our life is.

[47 : 00] If it has. Absolutely nothing to do. With that. Purpose. For why we're here. As a church. Of Jesus Christ. To labor with Jesus. Telling the lost.

Around you. Of life in Jesus. Sending the gospel. With your money. Speeding it on its way. With your prayers. Raising your children. For the kingdom of Christ. This is the grand mission.

Of the church. And once finished. The Lord Jesus Christ. Will descend from heaven. With a shout. And will gather his own. Into his barn. And the rest.

Will be burned. In the lake of fire. Under God's. Consuming wrath. Forever. And ever.

Let's pray. Our God. We thank you. For the Bible. This morning. We have our souls.

[47 : 55] To do with. Our never dying. Souls. To do with. How can. I a sinner. Be right with God. What must I do. To be saved.

These are the issues. That. That we want to know. For certain. And we thank you. That your word. Is so clear. Thank you. That Jesus. Saves us. From the coming wrath. By taking it for us.

Bring others. To trust in this savior. To glory in Jesus Christ. And to put no confidence. In the flesh. And then help us. As a church. To.

Link arms together. To strive together. For the faith of the gospel. Here in this place. In our families. And in our towns. And to the ends of the earth. All to the end.

That Jesus Christ. May be praised. We ask in his name. Amen.