

# BEREA, THE RECEPTIVE CITY: A NOBLE PEOPLE ACTS 17:10–15

## *Introduction*

This is an excellent study on what it is that makes a people noble.

- I. A night escape by Paul and Silas (v. 10).
- II. A concerned and God-fearing people (v. 11).
- III. A receptive people (v. 11).
- IV. A people who honestly sought the truth (v. 11).
- V. A thinking and searching people:  
they verified the message preached (v. 11).
- VI. An honest and decisive people:  
they believed what proved to be true (v. 12).
- VII. A courageous, protective, helpful and ministering people (vv. 13-15).

## ACTS 17:10–15 BEREAN

The city was about fifty miles southwest of Thessalonica. It was located in a quiet, out of the way place lying on the eastern slope of the Olympian mountains, and next to a well-watered plain. It was well off the Egnatian Way, that is, the major Roman road running through the country. Paul probably chose Berea because it was out of the way, thinking the opposition in the other towns against him might settle down. More than anything he wanted to preach the gospel so that lost men could be saved. Naturally, he could preach more freely and reach more people if there was peace.

The church...

- was founded on Paul's second missionary journey.
- was a noble people, of the very highest quality and character.
- had one prominent member mentioned in Scripture: Sopater (Acts 20:4).
- was described in Scripture only here.
- loved the Scripture and readily responded to Christ.
- had a strong testimony and legacy for loving the Scripture. Many *Berean Bible classes* are named after the Bereans. □

## **I. Acts 17:10 Courageous Escape**

Paul and Silas made a night escape. Remember they were not in Jason's house when the mob stormed it (vv. 5-6). When they returned, Jason and the Christian brothers naturally

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related what had happened. The decision was made that it would be best for Paul and Silas to escape by night.

1. Note the bravery of the believers. Jason had been put under a security bond, which certainly meant he was not to house or welcome the preachers any more. Also it probably meant he was to turn them over to the authorities for questioning and perhaps trial. The fact that they had to escape by night indicates this. But Jason, right along with the other brothers, showed enormous courage in helping Paul and Silas escape.

**Thought 1.** All believers need such courage. How many would have the courage to risk their lives or imprisonment to help other believers? Many do not even have enough courage to witness for Christ, fearing ridicule and embarrassment, which in most cases is only a mild rebuke.

2. The purpose for the escape was to save the lives of the preachers. But note what their minds were upon: not so much upon saving their lives as upon continuing to grasp opportunities to preach the gospel. People are lost and without Christ, doomed to sin and shame, death and judgment. And Paul wanted to live in order to reach them with the glorious news of salvation. They could be saved from sin and death; therefore, as soon as he entered Berea, he went into the synagogue to share Christ.

## II. *Acts 17:11 A Noble and God-Fearing People*

A noble people are a concerned and God-fearing people. The Berean people were a people of the synagogue and of the Scriptures, a people who worshipped God. They were sickened by the immorality and injustices of society, by the sin and shame, selfishness and greed, indulgence and license, unfairness and disadvantage, abuse and violence, dishonesty and stealing, deception and lying, sexual immorality and adultery of men and women against each other and against fellow human beings. They were sickened by a world that had forgotten what it is that builds character and nations:

=> righteousness    => truthfulness    => honesty    => justice  
=> morality    => love    => goodness    => brotherhood

A noble people have a concern about God and the things of God. They fear — stand in awe and reverence before God — knowing that God alone is the answer to the longing of their soul and to the ills of their society and world. (See *Corrupt Society*, Acts 16:14.)

**Luke 1:50** *His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.*

**Acts 10:35** *But accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.*

**Psa 25:12** *Who, then, is the man that fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him.*

**Psa 31:19** *How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

### III. *Acts 17:11 Spiritual Receptivity*

A noble people are receptive and open both to people and the truth.

1. They are a people with an even and well-balanced temperament. Their temperament is not...
  - negative
  - critical
  - sour
  - ill
  - ugly
  - downcast
  - despairing
2. They are a people with a healthy attitude toward others. Their attitude is not that of...
  - pride or superiority
  - being too busy
  - indifference
  - holier than thou
  - ignoring or neglecting
3. They are a people concerned about the welfare of others. Their actions and behaviour are not that of...
  - being selfish and self-centred
  - showing jealousy and envy
  - pre-judging and rejecting
  - reacting and abusing
4. They are a people who are open and receptive both to other people and to the truth. They are a people...
  - who are welcoming and hospitable
  - who are soft and warm
  - who listen and hear
  - who are fair and impartial
  - who are considerate and charitable

### IV. *Acts 17:11 Seeking Truth Honestly*

A noble people seek the truth and seek it honestly. They are open to seeking the truth in the Scripture as well as to seeking it in the world. Not everyone is honest in seeking the truth. Some claim to seek the truth but have closed minds to other approaches to the truth. They are closed to approaches that differ from the approach they wish to pursue. This is particularly true with the truth of Scripture and of Christ. Natural man has a bias and prejudice against the truth of Scripture and Christ. Therefore, in his pursuit of truth, he ignores and sometimes mocks Biblical truth.

But note: this is to be expected. Why? Because if the Bible is true, then man must surrender his life to Christ — all he is and has. And man fears and rebels against this demand. He is just unwilling to look at the truth of the world, that it is reeling under the unbelievable weight of pain and suffering because of sin and death. The only conceivable answer to meeting the mammoth needs of the world is to turn men's hearts to God. Only God can change the human heart from selfishness and inject enough love and care to meet the needs of man.

The point is this: most men are unwilling to face the reality of truth. Natural man has a bias against the truth of God and His Word. But not *the noble* of the world. The noble are

those who search for the truth and are open to all areas of the truth, including God and Scripture.

*John 5:39* “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.”

*Rom 15:4* For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

*1 Th 2:13* And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

## V. Acts 17:11 Seeking and Verifying the Truth

A noble people are an honest and thinking and searching people. They investigate, study and seek to verify the message of truth. Note: the Bereans received the message *with great eagerness* (meta pases prothumias): a willing desire, an eagerness, a hunger, a thirst to know the truth. A noble people do not shut their minds or hearts; they do not refuse to listen or consider.

Note another fact: a noble people do not just accept and swallow whatever is said. Paul himself was the authority proclaiming the truth; but the Bereans studied, investigated and examined the Scriptures for the truth themselves. And they searched daily. The truth of God and His world has no end; it is unfathomable. Discovering the truth is a daily responsibility. God has made it so (Lk. 9:23).

*Psa 119:2* Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.

*Isa 1:18-20* “Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

*Jer 29:13* You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

## VI. Acts 17:12 Commitment to the Truth

A noble people are an honest and decisive people. They believe the truth and commit their lives to it when they discover it. God rewards a diligent search for the truth. He reveals the truth to the human heart by His Spirit.

*John 5:39* “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.”

**Rom 15:4** *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

**John 8:31-32** *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

**John 16:13** *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

Note: many Bereans believed, and among the believers were many honourable women and men. The word *prominent* (euschemonon) means both good character and respectable and influential citizens. They were leaders in the community. Also note that both men and women were seeking God, attending the services and studying the Scriptures together, not just women.

**Acts 20:32** *“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*

## **VII. Acts 17:13–14 Ministering with Courage**

A noble people are a courageous and protective, helpful and ministering people. A noble people will always do all they can to stand up and protect those who proclaim the truth and do good. Nobility refuses to let the innocent be unjustly treated and abused. Note how this is demonstrated in the noble persons of Berea. The enemies of the gospel in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea preaching the gospel. So they pursued him and began to *agitate* and *stir up* (saleuontes) the people against Paul. The idea is a volcanic stirring or shaking of the people. The stirring was of earthquake proportions. (See the Galatian Jews who also pursued Paul to keep him from preaching, Acts 14:19.) But note the traits of nobility demonstrated by the Bereans.

1. They were courageous and protective. They immediately took matters into their own hands and bravely took action contrary to the wishes of the aroused citizens. They protected Paul by sending him away. However, Silas and Timothy remained back in Berea continuing to ground the church and to preach the gospel to the city.
2. They were helpful and ministering. The Berean Christians took a most unusual step to show their love and care: they provided an escort for Paul, helping and ministering to him all the way to Athens.

**Thought 1.** Believers must stand together, help and protect and minister to each other whenever needed. In the face of opposition, ridicule and embarrassment it may be tough. But we must be courageous and brave and support each other as brothers in the Lord — no matter the cost...

- at work
- at church
- at play
- at school

**Acts 20:35** *“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

**Rom 15:1** *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

**Gal 6:2** *Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.*

**1 Th 5:14** *And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ■*