

# Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

## **R<sub>2</sub>L – Resolved to Live: Doing Due Diligence** **Acts 17:10-15**

*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. 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. 12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. 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. 14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 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.*

I have entitled today’s sermon, “Resolved to Live Doing Due Diligence.” The term “due diligence” speaks of investigating a business or person prior to signing a contract, or to perform an act with a certain standard of care. We live in a time when we want everything to be quick; to be easy; to be prepackaged and easily digestible. I am all for making things easier, simpler, and more accessible. I love that I do not have to memorize everyone’s phone number because it is stored on my “smart phone.” Of course this convenience dumbs me down a bit because I do not have to apply due diligence in knowing such things.

And in this world of increasing smart phones, smart TV’s, smart homes, smart cars and the like, we have slipped into the notion that everything should be easier; that we should not have to work so hard at things. While that may not matter in some areas of life; there are others that yet require “due diligence.” Disciplining yourself for a good education is work; parenting is work; a marriage requires work; there are no short cuts. And one other area in which there are no short cuts; that requires due diligence, is the study and understanding of the Word of God.

Yet, in our pursuit of wanting things easier, the Christian community has often given itself over to the cheap and shallow gimmickry of men and women who claim to have figured this spiritual life thing out so that you can have it all now; you can be what you want, when you want, how you want without guilt or shame; who proclaim as truth things that have not been taught or known by the church except in the last few decades or so. And yet the Christian community eats it up! We spend millions of dollars buying up and giving to ministries whose key personalities are truly exceptional motivational speakers, yet, upon examination of what they are saying, it resembles little to nothing of the essence of what Jesus spoke. The Christian community has fallen into the trap that just because it bears the stamp “Christian”; it must be okay. So let me make some provocative statements:

Never assume that the pastor in every pulpit is a Christian. Never assume that the pastor in every pulpit is telling you the truth. To listen to some of my sermons and compare them to some of the messages delivered through the mega churches devoted to positive thinking and the prosperity gospel will result in a conflict. One of us is not telling the truth. And while I have a high degree of confidence that I am accurately handling the word of truth in accordance with 2 Timothy 2:15, and can defend my preaching, according to the text we have before today, along with the teaching of God’s Word, it is your responsibility to see if these things I teach, or others teach are so.

# Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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Therefore, never assume that the pastor has understood God’s Word correctly. A bible degree does not make a person a Christian, nor does it mean that a person qualified to understand and apply Scripture. Just because a person stands behind a pulpit does not make that person right. Just because a person has published a book or two, or has a New York Times best seller, does not make that person right.

Beloved, it is your privilege, it is your duty, it is your responsibility, and it is your obligation to evaluate what you hear from any preacher to make sure that it is in line with the Bible. And unlike these Bereans that we will look at in a moment, most, if not all of you, have the added privilege owning your own Bible; some of you more than one. It is estimated that more than 6 billion copies of the Bible have been printed, that is essentially one for every person on the face of the earth. The Bible remains the bestselling book in the United States and yet it is also reported as one of the most unread books. They fill our shelves, sit on our coffee tables, or are tucked away in a drawer. While the Bible is such a best-seller, how many of you can tell me the names of the 66 books of the Bible? How many testaments are there? Why is it divided as it is?

*[slide 05]* As a pastor, I get to hear all sorts of reasons why people do not read their Bible and essentially I can boil them all down to three.

The **first** is time. Time, everyone needs more time in order to get through their days. The sad thing is daily Bible reading is the one thing which gets eliminated in the time crunch. What needs to happen is a block of time needs to be added somewhere in the schedule. God and His word need to be first.

The **second** is that the Bible can be an intimidating book. It is full of words and concepts that are hard to grasp at first glance. But the key to learning about the Bible is getting together with those who have studied the Bible in order to learn from them.

And **third**, too many people think it is the job of the Pastor to study the Bible and then teach the people only what they need to learn. While it is true to a certain extent, that it is the Pastor’s job to teach, it is also the calling every Christian to “study” (the Word) in order to show themselves to be “an approved workman” who is at the ready to answer any question their way.

The bottom line is this, it takes time, commitment and resolve to understand and apply the word of God. May I ask you, when you read your Bible do you ask and plead with God to help you understand? Do you take advantage of Bible studies, of the Bible fellowship groups? Do you ask the pastor or others who have spent more time in the Bible about questions, about discernment, about what is worth your time reading?

All of this brings us to our text. I am going to approach this text a bit differently than you and I are accustomed. **First**, I will set the background of the text, walking you through the history; **second**, we will consider some lessons from the text; and **finally** we will look at an OT case study, an example of what we have learned.

## I. The Background

Remember that there had been an attack on the house of Jason in Thessalonica. The disciples quickly sent Paul and his team on to Berea, a town some fifty miles southwest of Thessalonica. According to verse 10, Paul wasted no time and unashamedly, with boldness, went into the synagogue and began to preach that Jesus is the Promised Messiah, the Savior, the long awaited Hope of salvation.

# Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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Then, in verse 11, we see the contrast between the Jews of Thessalonica and the Jews of Berea. Luke says that these folks in Berea **“were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica.”** This is an interesting statement, given that Thessalonica was the capital of the region; it was the “big-city”; the metropolis, supposedly filled with smart and noble people. Yet it was the people of backwoods Berea who were of nobler mind, of more resolve to not just swallow what was said, but to examine what was said.

*What was it that made these people of Berea more noble minded?* Luke records at least two things that I would draw your attention to; two things that must become part of each of us if we would be so noble minded.

**First**, notice how they received the word of God according to verse 11; **for they received the word with great eagerness...** The idea here is that there was a willingness, a predisposition, a preparedness to hear the word preached. Do you come prepared to hear the word preached? Do you come expecting to be challenged, stretched, encouraged and convicted and then the resolve to examine what was said to Scripture. There was a readiness an eagerness on these people’s part.

**Second**, we are told that they were **“examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so...”** Notice that this was not a onetime event, but a process; they were examining; investigating, searching. And what was their standard for comparing Paul’s preaching? Did they compare Paul’s preaching to Timothy’s or to Silas’. Is my preaching to be compared to John MacArthur or Steve Lawson? No, the standard is not the preaching of other men, except where those men are preaching the Word of God; for the Word of God is the standard. But there is more, because no one here is likely to argue with the fact that the Word of God is the standard by which you are to compare my preaching or any preaching you might hear. Where you may need to be challenged is by the word “daily.” These folks made it their daily practice to examine what they heard to the word of God. So the question is not simply, do you compare what you hear from this pulpit to the Word of God; do you examine, investigated, compare and prove that what I am teaching is Biblical; but do you do this daily! Do you think about what is preached and find daily proofs (or disproofs) to what is taught. That is a process! That takes time; and that takes resolve to fulfill your due diligence.

The Bereans did not simply accept Paul’s word because he was the apostle Paul. While he had a reputation, he was not as eminent then as he is to us today. Yet the Bereans did not dismiss what he was saying. Remember what he was saying to a largely Jewish audience; that Messiah had come; that Jesus was the promised Savior. The point is that they listened to the Word of God, they examined what Paul taught, and as was their custom, they studied it daily, comparing it to what was written in the Scripture, determining whether or not what he was teaching about Jesus was true. This is what it means to be noble-minded.

What does being noble-minded look like for us today? Purposeful listening is one trait. Do you know that the hearer makes the preacher? A congregation’s expectation becomes the preacher’s inspiration. And to this good listening one must add patient examination. The model congregation is a congregation well acquainted with the Bible; that looks from the sermon to the biblical text; from the biblical text to the sermon; from the biblical text to the context; and that binds preacher to stay within the sacred text which God has given to him. Such a congregation compels sublime preaching!

Have we lost our status as hearers of the Word! I know we speak rightly of being doers of the word; but that cannot happen unless you are first truly hearing the Word. Do you have your

# Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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Bible with you? There are preachers who quote fifty things that are not in the Bible, and yet, because of the way they say them, people believe that they really were in the Bible. If we would be “noble-minded” in the eyes of God, then we must acquaint ourselves deeply and accurately with the Word of God. How are we to rightly discern truth from error? How do we identify the spiritual magicians who conjure up all sorts of unbiblical truths and passes them off to the simple as God’s heart? It is only by the knowledge of the Bible; by you and me knowing the Bible. That is being noble-minded. And that is what the Bereans were according to Acts 17:11.

And then notice what happens because of this careful searching of the Scriptures. According to verse 12, **“Therefore many of them believed, along with an number of prominent Greek women and men.”** This has been true for generation after generation, that those who do a careful search of the Scripture come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Many men who had set out to disprove the Scriptures, when diligently examining them, have come to faith. One of the biggest reasons for unbelief is not disbelief in the facts of the Bible but rather due to ignorance of the facts of the Bible. Let us be resolved to give due diligence to the knowing and understanding of the Word of God.

Moving then to verse 13, we find that word got back to those in Thessalonica that many in Berea were believing Paul’s message. And so, the Jews of Thessalonica, who has sought to do Paul and the team harm before, came after them to stoke the fire of trouble against them. Notice that they were **“agitating and stirring up the crowds”** The idea is that these Jews, having confidence and courage by running Paul out before, were now shaking the crowds like an earthquake and disturbing them like a tornado. The attack was sharp and swift.

We do not know how long Paul and the team were in Berea, but it was long enough to establish a church and then, out of concern for safety of Paul, we learn in verses 14-15, that the disciples sent him out on a ship to Athens, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. How would you like to have been Silas and Timothy? Why did they stay behind? I think there are at least two reasons. First, they stayed behind to strengthen the faith of the new church there in Berea. And second, they stayed behind to debate the Jews because they were coming to discredit the message of Paul.

According to the close of verse 15, we see that Paul was a man who needed the encouragement of other believers. Yes, even the great apostle Paul knew he needed the burning fire of other believers to help him, and so we read there, **“and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.”**

## II. The Lessons to Learn

Now, having covered the history of the text, let us consider some of the lessons we need to learn and apply.

**First**, where Scripture is taught it demands a response. It does not matter whether you are a believer or not, notice that the Bereans checked out what Paul said against the Scriptures to see what he taught was so. Some believed in the message as the Word of God. They believed that the Word of God contained no errors and cannot err and so they trusted what it said as Paul revealed Christ to them from the pages. Many of you are familiar with 2 Timothy 3:16-17, a passage you ought to know by memory, as it confirms the source and benefit of the Word of God. There we read:

# Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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**16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

Paul wrote this to Timothy who saw that Paul not only believed it, but practiced it before the Thessalonians, before the Bereans, before all. The point is that since the Bible is the Word of the Holy and Unchangeable God, then we can and ought to submit to it and its authority immediately – seeing it as the standard by which all of reality must measure up. The problem is, if you believe the Bible as just a human writing, that it then must contain errors, then what are you doing here? For the truth is that if even just one part of God’s inspired Word is wrong, unreliable, or untrustworthy, then there is no reason would for believing any of it, much less submitting to its precepts as the Word of God? You must determine to respond to God’s Word.

**Second**, the teachings, or doctrines that men preach and people hold to must be carefully, thoughtfully and continually examined, even if it is based on Scripture. The Mormons based their teachings on Scripture, but it is not what the Scriptures teach. Like the Bereans, we need to check to see if what it taught is in accord with the Scripture. You know, I am certain that Paul had a good grasp of the Scriptures. Remember that he was one of the best-educated Pharisees in the world, and he even had been taught by Jesus. If there was anyone we could assume was right biblically, it would be Paul; and yet the Bereans did not assume that he was right based merely on his training or reputation. They knew that every human being is capable of error, whether it be “innocent” error, sinful error, or even an intentional evil twisting of the Scripture; and so they checked.

With all that said, we are also to avoid throwing a preacher’s teaching out, particularly an established, proven expositor of God’s Word. We need to be sure that what he teaches is biblically accurate; but we can start with the premise, “He has proven faithful to the scriptures before; I will start there and compare what he has said to Scripture.” In 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 Paul exhorted believers, people like you and me in a church:

**20 do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;**

Beloved, any preacher worth his salt will never be insulted if you come to him and say, “I did not understand how you came to that conclusion from the Scripture, would you please show me?” We must carefully and continually examine the teachings presented by Christians.

**Third**, and related to all that I have said, do not think, or more importantly, do not act as though the pastor/preacher is infallible. I promise you that I have said some things from the pulpit that were unclear and perhaps, on the rarest of occasion of course, was not biblically accurate. I am fallible. Every teacher of God’s Word is. Beloved, this is why God has ordained elders in the church. One of the charges given to elders is found in Titus 1:9 which says of elders,

**9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.**

# Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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And why are elders supposed to do this? As an example to the flock, so that you will also learn to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. Is it your resolve to do you due diligence. Some of you might be asking, “How can I do this due diligence?” Glad you asked.

In the most simple and straightforward of terms, I exhort each of you, from the youngest to the oldest who can read to spend time reading the Word of God daily. How else can you learn whether or not what others are teaching is Biblical unless you are spending time in the Book? If you are not already, read at least one chapter each morning or evening. If you need a reading plan, talk to me, I can get you one to cover any kind of time span. If you are not reading daily, regularly, be resolved to do so. If you are accustomed to reading your Bible regularly, daily, how can you push yourself further, deeper? Are you so comfortable with your routine that you are not stretching yourself?

Why should we read our Bibles? Well, in addition to helping us refute unsound teaching, let us remember that in this Book we have what God has desired and determined to say to us. The same God and Father Who sent His Son to live, to die for sin, to rise from the dead and ascend into heaven; this same God has given us His Word that we would know everything we need to know for life and godliness.

Let us be a people of the Book, to resolve to do our due diligence to grow by spending time in the Word of God, receiving help and understanding from the Spirit of God so that we might rightly and truly be known as the people of God. And such people compare everything they hear, everything they are taught to Scripture, so make sure it is in line with what is written. I exhort you, read the text; pray for understanding, look at good commentaries and other solid Christian books. Talk with other Christians with what you are learning. Question the pastor or elders for further explanation where understanding is needed. Beloved, we do not want there to be confusion when it comes to knowing what God has said. This is what it means to be those who have **“received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”**

I would like to ask a rhetorical question; one that I do not want you to answer out loud for concern regarding how some of you might answer. Here is my question, “Would you actually miss the Bible if it were not longer available? Would you miss perusing through its pages if you were not able to look it to see what God has said?”

### III. And OT Case Study – Hilkiah and Josiah

Let me close with a brief recounting the history of the kings of Judah and Israel from the books of 1 and 2 Kings. Please turn to 2 Kings 22. Most of you know that most of the kings in this history were dishonoring to God. The majority of the kings allowed the people to worship false gods and even to erect idols in the Temple. Eventually they allowed the Temple of God to fall into disrepair. Do you know that it is recorded that at one point, the Word of God had been misplaced; the priests did not even know where the scrolls of the Word of the Lord were located?

Then, about 622 BC, while Josiah was king of Judah, he thought it right to repair the Temple that had been neglected. Josiah provided the funds necessary to perform the repairs. According to 2 Kings 22, as the work as being done, Hilkiah, the high priest told Shaphan the scribe that he had found the book of the Law. The Word of God had been lost and neglected for years. Hilkiah and Shaphan read the book and then it was taken to King Josiah.

King Josiah had the Word of God read to him and upon hearing it, his response was to tear his clothes. Remember that when God’s Word is taught, there is to be a response. In 2

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## Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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Kings 22:13, Josiah responded by saying, **“Go, inquire of the Lord for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”**

Then, in 2 Kings 22:15-20, the LORD spoke to Hilkiah and the other priests saying, **“Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Tell the man who sent you to me, 16 thus says the Lord, Behold, I bring evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. 17 Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be quenched.’ 18 ‘But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the Lord thus shall you say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel, “Regarding the words which you have heard, 19 because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you,’ declares the Lord. 20 Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not see all the evil which I will bring on this place.”’ So they brought back word to the king.**

Again, having heard the Word of God, King Josiah responded by all of the inhabitants of Judah together and read then entire book of the Law to them. Then there was another response to repent and remove anything that hindered a right relationship to God. Josiah ordered that the idols be removed from the Temple, and the right worship of God be restored. Beloved, Josiah was loved God, and loved God’s Word. And once he heard the Word of God, he examined it and compared what he and Israel were doing in light of it. This is what we find in the Bereans; people who loved God and then went to the Word of God to make ensure that what they were hearing lined up with the Word of God so that they could then right live according to the Word of God.

We show our love to God when we are resolved to doing due diligence in hearing, reading and then obeying the Word of God. How deep, how fervent is your love to God? Will you pray with me for the grace to be more resolved to be love, know and obey the Word of God. May our prayer and our lives reflect the resolve of Psalm 119:97, 103-104; **“97 O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day...103 How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.”**

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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