

The Noble Bereans

“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. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.”
—Acts 17:11,12

As we enter another year, it is an appropriate time for all Truth-seeking students of the Bible to be reminded of the importance to diligently study the Word of God. The Bible is readily acknowledged as the greatest book of all time. Its far-reaching antiquity extends back to the very beginning of earth’s marvelous creative work and its ultimate preparation as a home for God’s earthly creation. Within its pages is found overwhelming evidence of its importance and

meaning to the human family. For centuries, it has been accepted by countless numbers of people as the divinely inspired Word of our loving Heavenly Father, the great God of the universe.

The Bible’s teachings and righteous principles have set it apart from all other books, and it remains

the standard for Truth even in our modern-day world. Its principal theme of redemption, and the ultimate recovery of the human family from the ravages of sin and death, may be found in its various books that were written by many authors over long centuries of time. This serves to emphasize the Bible's divinely inspired harmony and purpose. Our attention is thus drawn to the various principles of Truth, in which each inspired writer harmonizes with those that others have written, yet in a different time and place.

The Holy Word of God has been referred to as the very torch of civilization. Its moral and ethical teachings have done more to influence the minds of mankind to live a nobler life than has any other book. It is a nearly inexhaustible source of inspiring and consoling messages. Many have found the Bible to be a source of comfort during times of sorrow. Others have found strength to face the uncertain scenes of life, while some turn to its many lessons to find reassurance.

In particular, the Bible is the textbook of Christianity. It reveals the Heavenly Father's wonderful plan and purpose in the creation of his human family, and its salvation. This message is being carried out to a grand and ultimate conclusion that will culminate in the future administration of Christ's glorious kingdom of power and authority over all the earth. This, the Bible says, is "according to a plan of the ages," which God "formed for the anointed Jesus our Lord."—Eph. 3:11, *The Emphatic Diaglott*

With respect to the Bible's wonderful author and his eternal purpose, the Psalmist David wrote: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament

sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”—Ps. 19:1-10

Ministering for the Faith

As the Early Church was being established, the Apostle Paul and his companions traveled extensively to minister the Truth to Christian converts. They helped these new brethren in Christ organize congregations for study, service, and fellowship. By God’s great wisdom and providence, Luke, the historian and author of the Book of Acts, has recorded many of these important events.—Acts 1:1,2; Luke 1:1-4

The knowledge of Truth which Paul and others were preaching proclaimed the Heavenly Father’s plan and purpose for the ultimate salvation and reconciliation of his sin-sick and dying human family.

(Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:20; Tit. 2:11) The Holy Spirit of Truth also opened the way for a little flock of Christ's faithful followers to strive for the heavenly calling and to receive a position as part of the bride of Christ. We are thus assured, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—Luke 12:32

Those who are faithful will be privileged to share with their glorified Lord in his heavenly kingdom, and to extend blessings to all the families of the earth. (Gen. 22:16-18) This glorious arrangement also provides for the resurrection of all who are in their graves—those who unknowingly wait for the establishment of that yet future kingdom under the rule of Christ.—John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:25,26

Conflict Along the Way

During the apostle's extensive travels to spread the glad tidings of joy, many new Christian believers were brought into the fold, and to an appreciation of the Truth and fellowship with the Lord's people. However, prejudice and conflict often arose and followed Paul and his companions wherever they went. Friction existed between those who strongly held to the familiar teachings of the Jewish Law, and those who were teaching the new doctrines of Christ Jesus. These teachings, in the majority of cases, many heard for the first time.

Just prior to our featured scripture, Paul and Silas had escaped by night to make the trip from Thessalonica to Berea. (Acts 17:10) When they arrived they were blessed by the reception they had received at the local synagogue. They were greatly impressed by

the brethren's keen interest and spiritual growth in their study of God's Word, and they noted that this set them apart as being "more noble" than those who were of the congregation at Thessalonica.

An Admirable Trait

The word "noble" as it is used in this instance, points to the admirable quality of mind and character that the brethren in Christ at Berea manifested when they searched the Scriptures. It was, evidently, their desire to make the doctrine and teachings of the Truth their own. An improved reading of this scripture expands the thought of noble-mindedness, and has been so rendered in other Bible translations. For comparison we read, "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. Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men." (Acts 17:11,12, *New American Standard Bible*) Thus is emphasized the desire that these brethren had, not only in searching the Scriptures daily, but striving to examine and prove them carefully and with "great eagerness."

Paul and Peter's Testimony

Paul admonished the brethren in the church at Thessalonica: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (I Thess. 5:21) When writing to his beloved brother Timothy, the apostle encouraged him: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [handling, *NASB*] the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15) Later he admonished, "Continue in the things which thou

didst learn, and wast convinced of, knowing by whom thou hast been instructed; and that from a child thou hast known those holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise for salvation, through that faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for that discipline which is in righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work.”—II Tim. 3:14-17, *Diaglott*

In his first epistle, the Apostle Peter similarly urged, “As each one has received a free gift, so minister it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold favor of God. If any one speak, let it be as the oracles of God; if any one serve, let it be as from the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ; whose is the glory and the power for the ages of the ages. Amen.”—I Pet. 4:10,11, *Diaglott*

When accepted with a proper condition of heart, the admonition and encouragement of the Apostles Paul, Peter, and others have helped develop a Christ-like spirit in all of the Lord’s footstep followers since Pentecost. This includes their being proper stewards of the Truth, which is an important lesson for all Christians to emulate. This is especially true now for those who are living during the closing years of this “present evil world.”—Gal. 1:4

In Remembrance of These Things

The wonderful words of Peter written nearly two thousand years ago continue to be a blessing to us as followers of Christ. He proclaimed, “I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these

things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”—II Pet. 1:12-15

The apostle continually spoke the words of Truth that he had received from our Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry. “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming [Greek: presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.”—vss. 16-18

Peter emphasized further that we receive the Truth by way of the Holy Spirit, the power and influence, of God. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”—vss. 19-21

In his first letter, Peter made clear the fact that the words he spoke were to those who had given their lives in full dedication to God, “That the trial

of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing [revealing] of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end [result or outcome] of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”—I Pet. 1:7-9

These words of Truth had not been revealed to anyone else, not the prophets of old, nor even the angels. He explained, “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”—vss. 10-13

Wisdom from Above

The epistle of James is thought to have been among the earliest of the New Testament writings. It represents the teachings that were first given to the Jews who had converted to Christianity soon after our Lord Jesus’ earthly ministry had ended. James stresses, “Every good gift and every perfect

gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”—James 1:17

The Heavenly Father is the source of all Truth, and by way of his Holy Spirit he gives his people understanding. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”—vss. 18,19

Concerning the wonderful provisions of God to his people, James also pointed to the significance of God’s wisdom always being pure and holy. “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”—James 3:17,18

In the foregoing verses our attention is drawn to the fact that heavenly wisdom works in harmony with the divine character. Although the spirit of wisdom that comes from above is peaceable, the apostle did not place its importance before purity. True wisdom is peaceable only when it is consistent with holiness and purity. It can only be at peace with that which is holy. Gentleness then follows purity and is peaceable when it is sanctified by the Truth. Heavenly wisdom then rejoices in being “full of mercy”; and the “fruit of righteousness” is developed in the hearts of those who have been illuminated by the wisdom from above.

The Light of Truth

The Prophet Isaiah speaks of light and its relationship to life and Truth. In presenting the divine

purpose, he writes, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."—Isa. 42:16; 62:1

Many other scriptures also bring our attention to the special gift of light. "With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance." "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Ps. 36:9; 89:15; 119:105; Prov. 4:18

As a guide and spiritual perspective for the followers of Christ, we read, "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light."—Luke 11:33-36

Meditating on God's Word

Meditation is a mark of Christian character of those who seek to walk in the ways of our loving

Heavenly Father and who abide in his Word. Centuries before Jesus was born, the psalmist wrote, “Your commandments are my delight. Your testimonies are righteous forever; Give me understanding that I may live. I cried with all my heart; answer me, O LORD! I will observe Your statutes. I cried to You; save me, And I shall keep Your testimonies. I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words. My eyes anticipate the night watches, That I may meditate on Your word.”—Ps. 119:143-148, *NASB*

The psalmist further said, “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.”—Ps. 1:1-3

In his letter to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul wrote, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”—Heb. 4:12-14, *NASB*

Jesus’ Testimony

Jesus made clear the fact that he had been sent forth to carry out the Heavenly Father’s will and

purpose, and not his own. His humbling words are recorded in John's Gospel, where we read, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true." —John 5:30-32

When Jesus said, "There is another that beareth witness of me," he was pointing to John the Baptist. He was the forerunner of Christ and had prepared the way for his ministry. "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. ... Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."—vss. 33-37,39

Legacy of the Bereans

The Apostle Paul's observation that the church members in the city of Berea were noble-minded students of the Bible is a positive lesson for all of the Lord's people to ever keep in mind. These brethren sincerely believed in the infallible Word of God, and emphasized that it is the only true source for

understanding. They deeply appreciated its value and meaning as a “thus saith the Lord” for the final proof for what they believed.

Quoting once again our opening text, from the *Amplified Bible*, we read this concerning the legacy of the Berean brethren: “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. Many of them therefore became believers, together with not a few prominent Greeks, women as well as men.”—Acts 17:11,12, *Amplified Bible* ■