

## Acts 17:10-15 “How to Listen When Someone Opens the Book” \*\*

Main Idea: In Acts 17:10-15 God’s Word shows us how to listen, and how *not* to listen to the teaching of the Word of God. The text includes two examples, one positive and the other negative.

- I. The Bereans show us how to listen (10-12).
  - A. We see the setting (10).
    1. The preachers were Paul and Silas.
    2. The location was the synagogue.
    3. The message was the gospel.
  - B. We see the characteristics of a good listener (11).
    1. You must have a prepared heart.
    2. You must have a teachable heart.
    3. You must be willing to study on your own.
    4. You must recognize the ultimate authority is God, not the preacher.
    5. You must respond.
  - C. We see the results of good listening (12).
    1. God’s Word produces faith.
    2. God’s Word removes barriers.
- II. The Thessalonian Jews show us how not to listen (13-15).
  - A. Here are wrong responses (13).
    1. It’s wrong to resist God’s Word.
    2. It’s worse to keep others from hearing it.
  - B. Here are the results (14-15).
    1. Our message is controversial.
    2. Our responses will be mixed.
    3. Our ministry will include apparent setbacks.

Take Inventory: It matters how we listen to the Book.

I’ve entitled this morning’s message, “*How to Listen When Someone Opens the Book.*” The Book, of course, is the book I’m opening right now, the Bible, God’s holy Word. There is no book like it, for there is none like its author, God Himself.

*Scripture Reading: Acts 17:10-15*

What are you supposed to do when someone opens the Book? At first, you would think that’s an easy question to answer, that the answer is obvious. But is it? Think about what’s going to happen in the next 45 minutes or so as the Book is opened. Some people will fill in the blanks, others will make mental notes, others will count the boards in the ceiling, still others will plan this week’s menu, doze off for a minute or two, check out who else is in the room (and isn’t), pray and ask the Lord for help to do what’s being said, use the time to catch up on Bible reading, say an “Amen” once in awhile, or perhaps a combination of the above.

What are you supposed to do when someone opens the Book, from the pulpit, in Sunday School classes, during community groups, in family devotions, and more. What’s the correct response?

I’ve heard lots of sermons in my life—thousands in fact. That includes those preached in the hundreds of Sunday worship services I’ve attended since I was saved at the age of 11. That includes the sermons delivered in the daily chapels I attended for the eight years I was in college and seminary. That includes the sermons I’ve listened to on radio and tape (in the distant past) and CD (in more recent past) and online. Yes, I’ve heard lots of sermons. You probably have, too.

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

But there's a topic we don't talk about as much as we should, namely, *how to listen when God's Word is proclaimed*. I suppose we just assume everybody knows how to listen, that it comes naturally. But the Bible says that my heart is deceptive, so what comes "naturally" usually leads me away from God, not to Him.

As a church, we believe in the sufficiency of the Bible. That is, we believe that the Bible sufficiently addresses all matters pertaining to life and godliness. For instance, it shows us how to have eternal life and abundant life, how to be a God-honoring husband, how to please Him as a parent, how to deal with finances, stress, fear, and more. The Bible addresses everything we need to know about living life God's way.

If you are a faithful, church-going Christian, you will spend a lot of time in your life listening to God's Word. In a year's time, you'll be hearing fifty Sunday morning sermons. If the average sermon is 40 to 45 minutes, that's about 35 hours of listening a year. That's not counting Sunday evening and Wednesday evening messages, and messages heard on the radio, television, and online. If you add those sermons to the number, you could easily listen spend 100 hours a year listening to sermons.

Let that sink in. 100 hours a year. If you've been in church ten years, that's 1,000 hours. Some of you have been going to church for twenty, forty, or sixty years. That's 2,000, 4,000, or 6,000 hours of listening to sermons. That's a lot of time doing the same activity. No wonder Jesus said, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him *hear* (Mark 4:29)."

What are you supposed to do when listening to the Book? The preacher's job is to do his best, by the Spirit's help, to communicate the Word of God clearly and practically. But what is the hearer's job? What does God want us to do to maximize the time we spend listening to the proclamation of His Word?

The Bible itself answers that question. In Acts 17:10-15 God's Word shows us how to listen, and how *not* to listen when someone opens the Book. Two examples, one positive and the other negative.

#### I. The Bereans show us how to listen (10-12).

Our study begins at verse 10. "As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea." It was somewhere between the years AD 49-52. Paul was in the midst of his second missionary journey which started in Antioch, took him through Asia Minor to visit the churches started on the first missionary trip, and then into Europe to break new ground.

The brothers, that is, the men and women that Paul and Silas led to Christ in Thessalonica (verses 1-9), sent the missionaries out of town to escape a hostile situation. Some jealous Jews were trying to kill them.

Note that the brothers initiated the missionaries' departure. Paul didn't want to leave. He didn't leave unfinished tasks for God. He was willing to die for Christ, if need be.

Another time (in Acts 21) when facing a hostile situation, Paul didn't listen to the brothers' warning, saying, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." But in Acts 17, to stay in Thessalonica would have endangered not only his own life, but the lives of others as well, including some brand new Christians. And so, the brothers, out of their love for him and Silas, sent their spiritual parents to Berea.

**A. We see the setting (10).** "As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue."

Berea was about 50 miles west of Thessalonica. It was not as large as Thessalonica, nor as important. Paul actually had to leave the main road, The Egnatian Way, to get to Berea. The Roman writer Cicero described it as “off the beaten track.”

We’ll target in a moment how the hearers listened, but first, three facts about the preaching itself.

1. *The preachers were Paul and Silas.* Both men were Spirit-filled, gifted communicators of the Word, set apart for the gospel ministry by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:2; 15:40). Luke indicates that as soon as the missionaries arrived, they started preaching again. “On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue.”

Boom. Right away, back to the mission. These men took their calling seriously.

Too often, we have an unspoken checklist, starting with, “Will it fit into my schedule?” Then comes, “What will I get out of it?” And “Is it safe? Will I get hurt? Will people like me if I do?”

Not Paul and Silas. They were so in love with Jesus that they embraced every opportunity to make Jesus known, no matter the cost.

This week I saw a sentence that caught my attention by John Piper, “The mission will not be finished without martyrs.” He said it at last year’s CROSS conference, which is a conference intended to motivate college age young people to do all they can to make Jesus known to the nations. Piper shared the story of two missionaries, John and Betty Stam, who at the age of 25 laid down their lives, beheaded by the communists in China for, as he puts it... “the most loving cause in the universe: making the name of Jesus known in every corner of the world. This is a cause worth giving our lives for. Some will lay down their lives to go to the nations — a path that may end in martyrdom. Some will lay down their lives to send to the nations — a life of self-denial, generous giving, and urgent prayer. But everyone has a part to play in God’s grand, glorious, gracious, global plan.”<sup>1</sup>

So by all means, yes, Paul and Silas moved to their next preaching assignment. That’s what they were called by King Jesus to do. Preach the gospel.

2. *The location was the synagogue.* Just like in Thessalonica, they went to the Jewish house of worship. Which is amazing, when you think about it. It’s because they went to the synagogue in Thessalonica that they had to flee under the cover of darkness!

They could have rationalized, “We’d better stay away from the synagogue this time and not let the Jews know we’re in town. That’s where the hostility started, in the synagogue.”

But that’s also where the conversions occurred. So that’s where they went to preach.

3. *The message was the gospel.* You say, “How do you know that? I don’t see the gospel mentioned in verse 10.” No, it’s not in verse 10. It doesn’t need to be because it’s already in verses 2-3. “*As his custom was*, Paul went into the synagogue.” That’s what he did in every city. And what did he preach once there? “And on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ’.”

Wherever Paul went, he always preached the gospel. He opened the Scriptures to tell his audience about Messiah Jesus. He told them about how Jesus died, that He *had* to suffer and die, for this was God’s plan. Jesus came to die in the place of hell-bound

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<sup>1</sup> [https://crossforthenations.org/uncategorized/john-piper-the-mission-will-not-be-finished-without-martyrs/?utm\\_source=CROSS+Conference&utm\\_campaign=e65248ff99-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_07\\_31\\_04\\_22\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_2bdc29e31b-e65248ff99-162460866&mc\\_cid=e65248ff99&mc\\_eid=900b29acc5](https://crossforthenations.org/uncategorized/john-piper-the-mission-will-not-be-finished-without-martyrs/?utm_source=CROSS+Conference&utm_campaign=e65248ff99-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_07_31_04_22_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_2bdc29e31b-e65248ff99-162460866&mc_cid=e65248ff99&mc_eid=900b29acc5)

sinner, and having died, God raised Him from the dead. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him might have eternal life.

That's the message Paul preached in Berea, for it's the message he preached everywhere he went. It's the only message that can reconcile sinners to God and give them forgiveness and new life.

Daniel Webster, the famous American politician and orator, once spent a summer in New Hampshire, and every Lord's Day went to a little country church morning and evening. His niece asked him why he went there, when he paid little attention to far abler sermons in Washington. He replied: "In Washington they preach to Daniel Webster, the statesman, but this man has been telling Daniel Webster, the sinner, of Jesus of Nazareth"<sup>2</sup>

That's what any faithful preacher will do. As did Paul and Silas.

How did the audience respond? By God's grace, marvelously.

**B. We see the characteristics of a good listener (11).** "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." If you want to know how to listen to a sermon in a way that pleases God, look carefully at the Bereans and you'll see five characteristics of a good listener.

1. *You must have a prepared heart.* The text says they were "more noble" (ESV), in the NIV, of "more noble character than the Thessalonians." When Paul preached in Thessalonica, some listened. But many of the Jews refused to give ear. Their minds were made up before Paul even spoke. His message was clear, his reasoning plain, his scriptural support ample, but it made no difference to them. They had other loves that blocked their reception to the Word. They loved their religion and the status and security and recognition it gave them, which is why they were jealous (verse 5) when Paul preached and people started leaving them.

Friends, if we have other loves in our lives, we won't be good hearers of the Word. Other loves block good reception. It's like listening to an AM station in your car when you drive through a tunnel. The signal is blocked by a barrier.

If you've got a lot of clutter in your life when the preacher opens his mouth, you won't hear the Book very well. If you come to church thinking about your girlfriend, or Monday's business deal, or the big game that's on tv later, you're going to have a hard time listening to God's Word.

And we all battle competing loves. Those preaching, as well as those listening. Which is preparation is mandatory, to get rid of the circuit jammers.

If we wait until Sunday morning at 9:30 to prepare ourselves to hear God's Word (or preach it for that matter), it's too late. Start Saturday evening by spending time in the Word and prayer. Ask God to give you a receptive heart to the message you will hear the next morning. In reality, we ought to be preparing ourselves all week long for Sunday, cultivating noble character. Just think of it. We get to hear God's Word! That's worth preparing for!

So to be a good listener, first of all, you must have a prepared heart.

2. *You must have a teachable heart.* What does verse 11 say the Bereans did? They gave evidence of their noble character. What kind of evidence? They "received the

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<sup>2</sup>Tan, P. L. 1979; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1997. *Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations.* Bible Communications: Garland TX

word with all eagerness.” To receive something, we must acknowledge *need*. So with God’s Word.

“I don’t know all I need to know,” a person with a teachable heart confesses. “I need what God’s servant is saying in this sermon.” The Bereans received the message with *great eagerness*, like a beggar receives news that bread is available.

The Bible emphasizes the importance of a teachable spirit. Proverbs 9:9 says, “Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.”

To be saved you must have a teachable spirit, a willingness to admit your need for God’s Word. We see evidence of this in the conversion experiences of people recorded throughout Acts.

For instance, we’re told in Acts 2:41, “Those who *accepted* his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” To be saved you must *accept* the Word. Here’s what Cornelius told Peter in Acts 10:33, “So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to *listen* to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

That’s one of the things for which Paul commended the Thessalonian believers. He wrote in 1 Thessalonians 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.”

Did you realize an absence of a teachable heart is evidence that a person is unregenerate? In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 Paul had this to say about lost people, “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”

Why do people perish spiritually? Because they *refused to love the truth*. My friend, if you don’t want to listen to God’s Word, you have reason to question your faith.

On the other hand, the mark of a saved person is just the opposite, a *love for the truth*. 1 John 4:5-6 “They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God *listens* to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.”

The psalmist cries out in Psalm 119:97, “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.” Listen to his passion in Psalm 119:148, “My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.”

When you walk into your Sunday School class, or youth group, or this auditorium, do you *expect* things to change in your life in the next hour? The Bible is profitable, says 2 Timothy 3:16, “for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.” Do you expect to experience that profit by learning doctrine, or being reproofed, corrected, and instructed in right living? Do you expect God to change you? If not, why be surprised if nothing happens?

To be a good listener, you must have a prepared heart and a teachable heart.

3. *You must be willing to study on your own.* Notice what the Bereans did next in verse 11. They *sought* the Scriptures. It’s good to hear God’s Word. It’s good to read God’s Word. But this goes further. We must *search* it.

This is a characteristic of the blessed person. Psalm 1:2-3 “But *his delight is in the law* of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by

streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”

Some people reject ideas just because they’re new. Other people accept them just because they’re new. The Bereans did neither. Just because the message was new, they didn’t oppose it. But they didn’t endorse it quickly, either. They investigated it.

And not just on Sunday mornings. They searched the Scriptures *daily*. They invested time every day checking out what God’s Word said.

If your spiritual diet consists of one sermon a week, you’ll be malnourished. If a sermon has accomplished its goal, it will create a hunger for more, and not just more sermons, either. More *personal* intake of God’s holy Book.

In order to live a God-pleasing life, we need the Book. Not dabble in it, but crave it, as a starving man craves food.

Listen to what Solomon had to say to his son in Proverbs 2:1-5, “My son, if you *accept* my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you *call out* for insight and *cry aloud* for understanding, and if you *look for* it as for silver and *search* for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.”

We cannot be passive and grow. If we want to overcome sinful habits, we must cultivate a craving appetite for the Word of God. James 1:21 says, “Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and *humbly accept the word* planted in you, which can save you.” 1 Peter 2:2 “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

George Muller read the Bible over 200 times. No wonder he was such a man of faith. He wanted the Word. How badly do we want it? To be a good listener on Sunday, we must make it our priority to study on our own the rest of the week.

4. *You must recognize the ultimate authority is God, not the preacher.* Don’t miss the next phrase, “To see if what Paul said was true.”

This is critical to see. The New Testament doesn’t present the apostles as infallible men. Leaders, yes, and the church was certainly no mere democracy. When faced with decisions, God wants His church to give great weight to the counsel of His men who lead it. *But*, the early church didn’t put its leaders on a pedestal, nor should we. Pastors are not perfect, nor are Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, and anyone else who teaches the Word in the church. We should appreciate those who teach the Word, true. But we should also check the Scriptures to make sure their teaching is right.

Some of you are good at building things. If you are framing a wall, what do you use to determine if it’s straight, if it’s *right*? Do you trust your eyes? Do you say, “That wall is okay. It *feels* good to me.”? I doubt it. A good carpenter uses an objective tool to test his work, in this case, a level. His feelings aren’t the basis for deciding whether the wall is right or not. The instrument is. The level tells him the objective truth.

So too when it comes to building lives. The Scriptures are the standard, not our hunches and feelings.

Dear friends, if you can’t support something with Scripture, don’t believe it. If you hear a teacher say something that doesn’t square with the Word of God, chuck it. If you find yourself leaning towards a decision that lacks biblical support, rethink it. The Scriptures are our authority.

That goes for the books we read, the preachers we watch on television, the music we listen to (for music is a powerful teaching tool) and everything else. The ultimate

authority is God, not the preacher, and the ultimate standard is God's Word, not human opinion.

I agree with an assessment by James Boice, "There are preachers who want people to accept what they say just because they say it. They do not want to be challenged. Good preachers want a congregation that hears the Word, receives it eagerly, and then goes to the Scriptures daily to see if what is being taught is really true."<sup>3</sup>

One more trait of a good listener. You can have a prepared heart, a teachable heart, a willingness to study on your own, and a recognition that the ultimate authority is God, and still be a deficient hearer. There's something else that is vital.

5. *You must respond.* And the Bereans did. Verse 12 says that many of them *believed*.

I must warn you. We can study the Word of God with wrong motives. Jesus confronted a group of religious teachers about this in 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."

To be Bible-centered is good, but only if we study the Bible with the proper intent, and that is to know and glorify the author of the Bible, Jesus Christ. To study the Bible merely for the Bible's sake borders on idolatry, the worship of a Book. We love the Book, yes, but we love it because we love the Person the book is about.

Several years ago a man and his wife were found frozen to death in their car. A blizzard had dumped tons of snow in the area, burying their vehicle. Before she died, the woman scribbled a note on a piece of paper and stuffed it in the glove compartment. The note read: "I don't want to die this way." Tragically, less than six feet from their icy grave was a stranded bus, whose festive passengers remained warm throughout the night.<sup>4</sup>

What you don't know can hurt you. But what you do know and fail to appropriate can hurt you too. To be a good listener, you must choose to respond by faith and obedience every time you hear the Word.

So what happens when we listen well to the Book?

**C. We see the results of good listening (12).** "Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men." When people listen well, God's Word produces two results.

1. *God's Word produces faith.* The text says they *believed*. Many believed, in fact. They believed what they heard about their need and the sufficiency of Jesus to save.

That's the right response, *to believe*. We are saved by faith, when we say, "Yes, I believe what I'm hearing. I put my trust in it, in the person who is the subject of this message, Jesus Christ, who died and conquered death to rescue sinners like me."

And that response should happen every time I hear the Book. "Yes, I believe that. I put my total trust in this person whose word I just heard. What He says, I believe. What He commands, I will do."

In Acts 20:4 we're introduced to Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus. Apparently, he believed and later became part of Paul's missionary team.<sup>5</sup>

The preaching of the Word of God can do what no human effort can accomplish. It produces faith in the hearts and lives of hearers (Rom. 10:17). That's not all...

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<sup>3</sup> James Boice, *Acts*, p. 292.

<sup>4</sup> *Today in the Word*, October, 1990, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> In Rom. 16:21 he may be the one referred to as Paul's "relative," there called Sosipater

2. *God's Word removes barriers.* Who believed? Look again at verse 12. "Many of them therefore believed." The "many" refers back to the Jews mentioned in verse 11. But "not a few Greek women of high standing" also believed, "as well as men," Greek men.

In this day of division, talk about a relevant verse! What can unite people of different ethnic backgrounds, race, and social status? What can bring together very different people? This can. This Book. And when rightly proclaimed and received, this Book does. Here's why.

The playing field is level when the Word of God is opened. We are all sinners. Your skin color doesn't matter. Nor does your gender or bank account or education or anything else. This unites us. We are all sinners. But in this Book the God who created us offers all of us alike the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ. And when we receive His gift, He reconciles us to Himself.

Yet that's not all. He also reconciles us to each other and makes us one family, where Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, female, educated, and illiterate are all one, dead to self, alive in Christ.

Yes, incredible things happen when we listen well to the Book. Yet the story isn't over. Whenever the Book is opened, there are two types of hearers. It was true in Berea, as it is all over the world today. If the Bereans teach us how to listen to a sermon, the group we're about to meet teaches us how *not* to listen.

## II. The Thessalonian Jews show us how not to listen (13-15).

**A. Here are wrong responses (13).** "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."

That's astounding. Why did these people travel 50 miles to attack Paul? The text says it's because Paul was preaching the Word of God. That's a sobering indicator that not everyone is happy when the Book is opened.

So how did the Jews in Thessalonica even find out about the ministry of the Word in Berea? There were no telephones, but apparently, the news spread by word of mouth about the preaching happening in Berea. And when some heard it, they went ballistic. They traveled a day and a half trip to *stop* this supposed work of God.

Wiersbe reminds us, "Satan also has his 'missionaries' and they are busy (2 Cor 11:13-15)."<sup>6</sup> These guys are on a mission, a destructive one, and they illustrate for us a couple of very dangerous responses to the ministry of the Word.

1. *It's wrong to resist God's Word.* That's what they did in Thessalonica. They heard Paul preach, dug in their heels, and said, "No! We will not repent and believe this message!" That's a tragic response. Frankly, it was our response when we first heard the Book, and still would be apart from sovereign grace.

Perhaps it's what you are doing right now. You're resisting the Word. I urge you to stop, for if you persist in your resistance, it will cost you your soul. Ask God right now to give you a soft heart, a new heart, that's fertile soil for the seed of His Word.

But secondly, as bad as resisting God's Word is, there's something even worse.

2. *It's worse to keep others from hearing it.* And these individuals did just that. To refuse to listen to your gracious God's message to you, that's a shame. To make it hard for others to listen, that's shame upon shame.

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<sup>6</sup> W. Wiersbe, p. 471.



I think of the man who says, “I don’t need the Bible, church, or this ‘Jesus’ stuff.” And that’s certainly a bad place to be. But what’s worse is when he makes it hard for his wife and kids to hear God’s Word.

The same happens in church, when a teen comes, not because he or she wants to, but because the parents rightly insist. Then when the Book is taught in Sunday School, he or she of course pays no attention. That’s a bad place to be. But what’s worse is that this young person does all he or she can to distract those around them from hearing the hope-giving message of God’s Word.

Dear friends, please guard your heart against wrong responses to the Word. Why?

**B. Here are the results (14-15).** In Berea, it was this: “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.”

Why Paul and not Silas? Apparently, they considered him the most “dangerous” of the preachers, since he was the leader. Again, note that the brothers *sent* Paul out of town. He didn’t run. They sent him, an act which speaks of their love for him. Those who came to know Christ under his preaching now show their appreciation for the preacher.

Silas and Timothy stayed behind. You say, “Why would they stay if it’s so dangerous?”

Answer this. If you had a baby during war time, would it be difficult? Sure. Would it be easier to survive without the baby? Sure, but no good parent would even think of abandoning their child for personal safety. Children need nourishment if they are to grow.

Paul’s strategy was the same wherever he went. He took the message of Christ to a town, led people to Christ, and then left for other unreached cities—but not before making sure they had other qualified men to teach them the Word. That’s why Silas and Timothy stayed behind. People need the Word.

Do how does this apply to us? I see three important lessons here we need to grasp.

1. *Our message is controversial.* The Lord never said it would be easy.
2. *Our responses will be mixed.* As we share the Book with people, praise God, some will believe it and be saved. But know this. Some will reject it, and some will even do all they can to hinder others from hearing it.

3. *Our ministry will include apparent setbacks.* I say “apparent” because nothing takes God by surprise. Paul was thrown in jail in Philippi, run out of town in Thessalonica, and forced to do the same in Berea. If that happened to us, we might conclude, “Maybe I’m not cut out to preach. Maybe God’s trying to tell me to find a different occupation.” But Paul knew that setbacks were a part of life and ministry.

When the missionary David Livingstone was asked where he was prepared to go, he answered, “I am prepared to go anywhere, *so long as it is forward.*” That was Paul, too. Quitting was not an option, no matter how difficult the road.

So it matters, my friends, how we listen to the Book. If the Lord tarries and grants us life, we may well listen to many more sermons and Sunday School lessons and Kids Club devotionals. I encourage you, resolve to listen to the glory of God. Have a prepared heart, a teachable heart, study the Scriptures on your own, and remember that the ultimate authority is God and not the preacher.

But above all, make a decision right now that every time you hear the Word, you will *respond* by being a doer and not simply a hearer.

I must hasten to say this. I count it a great privilege to be a pastor in this church, for by God's grace, you practice the very things I have just mentioned. I have heard more than one guest speaker say to me, "I enjoyed preaching to your folks. They listen well to the Word." To which I say, Amen, and praise be to God.

*Take Inventory: It matters how we listen to the Book.*

Closing Song: #275 "How Firm a Foundation" (all four verses)

Community Group Discussion:

1. This morning's message was entitled, "*How to Listen When Someone Opens the Book.*" Take time as a group to re-read the text, Acts 17:10-15. Speaking generally, what are some things we learn about Christ from this account? About His mission? About ourselves and the people we're trying to reach?
2. Take a look again at what happened to Paul and Silas in verses 10-12. The people at Berea were a breath of fresh air to them. How so? What do we learn from the Bereans about how to listen to a sermon?
3. The Lord works through the preaching of His Word to save sinners and transform them into His Son's likeness. Think back at how He has done this in your own life. Are there particular sermons or Sunday School lessons that stand out? Are there particular passages? Take a couple of minutes to share these reflections with the person seated next to you. Then have several share with the entire group, all to the glory of the Giver of the Book!
4. Being a good listener when God's Word is opened does not happen automatically. What are some hindrances that we must overcome? What are some practical things that have helped you grow in this area?
5. Spend time as a group giving thanks for the wonderful Book God has given us. Also, spend time praying and asking the Lord to bless the ministry of His Word in our church and community.