

# Berea

“Places in the life of Christ”



*“Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” Luke 18:17*

Berea was a small city on the eastern side of Mount Olympus. Paul and Silas preached there and the people really scrutinized the preaching and found them to be men of God’s word. Berea was also sort of a respite for Paul.

Paul, Timothy and Silas had been preaching as usual in the synagogue at Thessalonica. However some of the people were upset. Paul and Silas had to get out of the city. They were sent to Berea by night. As soon as they got there, Paul started preaching in the synagogue. The people of Berea listened to what the men had to say and were very accepting.

When the trouble makers from Thessalonica heard that the people of Berea were accepting the preaching of the two men they forced from their town they went to Berea and started stirring up the crowds and starting riots. Paul had to flee. Timothy and Silas stayed behind. When Paul reached Athens he sent for the others to come also. Paul, along with the other two, had a group of people in Berea come to know Christ and His teachings.

Acts 17:10-15 tells us that when some people hear about God’s love they feel threatened and cannot accept it with simple faith. They don’t know how to respond. Berea was an “off-the-beaten-path” city where the people accepted the preaching of these men and became believers. They weren’t afraid of faith. Many times, we hear of people who just can’t accept the simple faith of a child which we are called to do by Christ. So they rebel in various ways. Some of the people of Thessalonica chose violence.

In Berea, people listened, they learned, and they accepted God’s word. Paul was encouraged there. Berea was a place where these men could feel they were being encouraged and not run out of town. Today, we may compare Berea to our churches. It should be a place where we fellowship with other Christians and are fed to face the trials of life. It should be a place where we go to worship and encourage each other.

When we hear God’s Word we have a choice. We can be like the people in Berea and accept the Scriptures like a child with a simple faith. Or we can rebel in our own way like the rebels from Thessalonica. The path is our choice.

“The Road Not Taken  
by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”\*

Only the poet knows what was in his mind when he wrote that poem. Only each one of us knows if we made the wrong choice or the right choice.

Berea is not just another town. It became a retreat where the men felt free to speak about God and were fed by the people. That is the role of us in the church today. The church is just a building, but as the song says “We are the church.” We can be safe there and know that we are in God’s hands. That is a wonderful feeling. But, we all the church and we have the responsibility to make sure that anyone who enters feels secure and is fed, like the men did in Berea. The difference in our life can be wonderful. The difference in our eternal life will be remarkable. We have many forks in our road of life - some consciously and some unconsciously. Some will make a huge difference in our lives, some are not even noted. We can look back, and we always have wonderful hind sight. Paul chose to keep preaching even though it meant imprisonment and being run out of town! Paul had many choices. The choice to go to Berea was a good one and one that also gave him some confidence to carry on.

We can quote Yogi Berra who supposedly said “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”\*\* We have many choices. We can praise God every day for the blessings we receive, or we can just accept the gifts and never respond. We can go to church and just sit there, or we can be fed and in turn be willing to reach out and help others. There is a wonderful world waiting for us today. Which “fork in the road” we take will make the difference in our life.

Heavenly Father, Your blessings continue to flow to us every day. We quarrel among ourselves and make many wrong choices. Thank You for allowing us to always return to You. Thank You for Your constant forgiveness and amazing grace. Help us to make the right choices through walking and talking with you in prayer. Amen

1. How can a place like Berea be a retreat? Do you have a place for a retreat that you enjoy? Is the church a retreat for you?
2. How important are daily choices in your life?
3. Do you remember important “forks in the road”?
4. How important was the ministry of Paul for his time and for ours?

\*Mountain Interval by Robert Frost, 1916

\*\*The Yogi Book: I Really Didn’t Say Everything I Said! by Yogi Berra, 1998