

The Importance of Others Acts 17:10-15

We started to look at this passage of Scripture last time we were together. We saw that Paul and Silas were forced out of Thessalonica. They were basically smuggled out at night, and these young believers at Thessalonica were left on their own, but really not left on their own, because they had the Lord Jesus who would never leave them or forsake them. We also saw that immediately when Paul came to Berea he entered the synagogue and began to preach the gospel of Christ.

And last time we were together we considered verses 11-12. Look at them again, **“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.”** We saw three disciplines of Bible intake that led to change. One was that their hearts were prepared before they ever came into the synagogue. They were eager, zealous to learn the Scriptures and hear them preached. For that eagerness to be in your life there has to be preparation and way we walk into church. Also they searched the scriptures. They were just not Sabbath people, but they wanted to know the God of the Scriptures. So they poured over the Scriptures seeing if these things were so. And it is incredible that those who seem to benefit the most from the gathering of the church to praise God and hear of him, are those who truly have been spending time with him through the week.

And we saw there was not just a learning of these truths but an application of these truths. We see that they believed. In fact, many believed along with leading women and men — who would have been Gentiles. They are not called God-fearers so they might not be connected to the synagogue but might have been Gentiles who came to Christ through the preaching in the market place.

And one of the things we see emphasized through this text is not just the activities of Paul and Silas but also the activity of those who came to Christ and their mutual service and love for Christ. And I love this because our faith is an active faith, and therefore it is amazing how God uses people in our lives. There are different relationships we have. These are redemptive relationships. People seem to be in our lives and they do bring trials and difficulties. And if you are involved in ministry you realize many of these ministries are one way. And that is great. It is you giving and you serve others. They come with their problems and difficulties and questions and you seek to help them and point them to Christ. Praise God — he uses us to build up the body of Christ, to help others mature into that blessed image. But the highest and most meaningful relationships we have in this life are those where there is a mutual care and protection, and most importantly it is centred in Jesus Christ.

And you know what type of relationships I am talking about. There are some relationships that seem to zap all our energy. We give and give and give. And we need to be giving. There are many that are really high maintenance because individuals never seem to grow in the Lord. But there are others that the Lord in his glory gives us that are so sweet and precious and so refreshing. They really are mutually beneficial. They really have a give and take. There really is a help and aid and care and concern for the spiritual welfare of one another. There really is a stimulating of one another to love and

good works. And the whole goal of even pouring our lives into others is they would mature and pour their lives into others.

And I really love this in the text, because the believers at Berea might be preparing their hearts beforehand. They certainly have private devotions, but they are also mutually pouring over the Scriptures. They are mutually seeing and savouring the truths of Christ and all that he is for us. And certainly those relationships that seem to zap so much spiritual vitality from us God has necessarily placed in our lives, but there are others that we truly need to cultivate, and nurture for the spiritual well-being of them and for our own. Folks, we need others. We need the spiritual help of others. Some isolate. Isolation has never been God's means of spiritual growth, protection and encouragement. God uses the members of the body of Christ in order to build each other up in love and good works for his glory.

But here is the question: do we have these relationships in our lives? Are we cultivating redemptive relationships where others could come with their cares and concerns and struggles? And sometimes it is easier to give counsel, but other times it is harder to receive counsel. We might be afraid of the hard condemnation of others. But part of that fear is that we just have not built good and solid and trusting and necessary redemptive relationships in our lives. And is there anyone or a number of people that you can go and really share your burdens with? I have this kind of relationship with this person. I want us to look at this passage and realize that Christianity is really a shared life and experience. You can't do it on your own. If you are trying to do it that way, you know you are just spinning your wheels. It really is the involvement of each of us in the lives of others, and others involved in our lives. I want us to see a couple things from this text. I hope it will encourage us to be one anothering.

1. We need one another because this is a difficult world. V.13.

One of the things we realize is this is a hard world to live in. Certainly there are many blessings that come from the Father of lights. And all we can do is give thanks to God for those things. But we realize there are difficulties and trials of all different sorts. There are going to be people who just do not like you and will oppose you just because of your faith. There are going to be trying relationships in our lives — people we should be close to but there is distance and animosity. You can't probably think of some right now. Some of you have it in your very families. There are going to be physical, economic, problems with our emotions, lethargy toward God, and every other kind of temptation and trial that comes into our lives because we live in this fallen and broken world. And that brokenness is not just around us but in us. And what has God given us? God has given us one another. Do we see the danger and need of one another?

Paul longed to see the Romans as he began his letter to them, and listen why in Romans 1:12, **“that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.”** There it is, that mutual encouragement one with another. And listen to Paul's instructions in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, **“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”** Notice that building up one another is not something that can be done in isolation but is done in community. Certainly we can be hurt by others even in the household of faith. All of us are being changed but we have not reached that goal of Christ-likeness. But the benefits of the

community of believers far outweighs any of these difficult nuances. We need others in our lives. And here is a truth about this world — you will go through trials and suffering that you never thought you would ever go through. And it is easy to say that God will see me through them, and he will. But what is the means that he uses to help us persevere and even grow through trials, suffering, and opposition? It is the body and those in the body.

So with that in mind, I want us to look at why we need one another, look at this verse and realize how quickly things change in our lives, this really is a broken and evil world which is opposed to Christ, **“But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.”** We see these contrasts throughout the Book of Acts, and it is incredible how quickly things change. Here is great fruitfulness, and it is followed by great opposition. The Jews who had opposed Paul and Silas in Thessalonica heard of the gospel outbreak they quickly mobilized and came to Berea to put a stop to this. And here we see the danger of the world. And there are a few things I want us to see in the text. One is the reason for the opposition. It is not so much that Paul and Silas believed that Jesus was the only way of salvation, but noticed, **“they learned that the word of God was proclaimed.”** Do you see that in the text? Often we take the opposition and rejection, even the hatred of others personal. But so often it really is not personally against us, but it is against our Lord. It is against the definition of sin. We do not define what sin is. God has declared what sin is, whether anger, idolatry, lust, same sex relationships. He has declared all of us as sinners and deserving of punishment. Yet people hate message being proclaimed. It stirs up passions. They also hate that Jesus is the only way. They want to decide what way they can come into the presence of God.

And the believer’s relationship with Christ is personal, but the rejection of the believer, the hostility against the believer is not personally against them. If you never preached or professed or mentioned the name of Christ then there would not be this animosity. So if you love Christ you will suffer. Another thing we see here about this opposition is that it was active. They acted on their hatred against Christ. The text says that these Jews came all the way from Thessalonica to Berea which was about 75kms or about three days journey with the sole purpose of terminating the ministry of this proclamation, and in particular the apostle Paul. Now you have to have an incredible amount of anger and hostility just to oppose something. The deep passions that we have for Christ creates the opposite passions, which are just as deep in those who reject Christ. Even today there are many from various different walks of life that have made it their soul mission to stamp out Christianity. We live in a very dangerous world.

And the third thing we see here is they sought to get others involved. And they knew how to do it. Look back at what they did in Thessalonica in verse 5, **“But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.”** And now we read here they get together another angry mob, **“agitating and stirring up the crowds.”** The meaning of agitating and stirring up is inflaming the inner passions so as to act. Again, it could have been so many half-truths. These men preach against the gods you serve. These gods will punish you if

you don't act. This religion is against the Emperor, they say Jesus is King. Rome will come against you and burn your houses and kill your children. Are you going to let this continue? Much like individuals stir passions in politics today.

And it is amazing because I have had people on the phone and even in my office with inflamed passions. And they are basically venting and shouting. And once you get to that point there is no reasoning with those kinds of individual. They cannot reason. Why? They are not being driven by intellect any longer but driven by ungodly and out of control passions. Ever try to reason with an angry person who is blowing their top? It cannot be done. And the whole goal of the unbelieving Jews is the termination of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The whole goal is to somehow find Paul and end his life. Now that is deep seated hatred. That is opposition. That is the fallenness of the world.

And here is my point folks. This is a dangerous world. We will go through that we never thought we would go through. Some of you no doubt are going through that and have gone through that. And there are so many other things we suffer just because of where we live. There is no end of the evil done against us. But we have another problem that many times is greater than the evil around us. That is the sin that is in us. We interact with the opposition. We can cower with fear, or get angry and frustrated with others. There are all kinds of ungodly responses that come not from the evil outside but inside. And we feel all alone in the middle of our lives. But the God of all mercy has given us one another to help us in the battle against the world, the flesh and the devil. In the midst of the confusion that comes through the trials of life God gives us pastors, leaders and teachers, fathers and mothers in the faith, brothers and sisters to aide us in seeking and making much of Christ. But here is the question: are we realizing not only the danger, but God's provision in giving us so many that truly are an aide to our soul? Are we willing even to reach out for help? We need one another in this hard world.

2. We need one another in order to carry out the ministry. Vv. 14-15.

The functionality of the body of Christ is simply amazing. And it should be obvious that we cannot do everything. None of are omnipotent or omnipresent. And we should be both thankful that God has saved us not just to observe or sit or be served but to serve others. And wherever we are spiritually God can and does uses it. Think of when someone is going through a loss of a loved one or gone through major surgery how the body of Christ comes alongside. Some might send texts and phone calls, other might pay bills, still others might make meals or provide childcare, still others will come and pray, others will minister the word, still others will weep with those who weep. And think of all of the necessary and different ministry that are directed toward that person or family. We often say when we go through deep waters that I do not know how I would have ever gotten through this without God. And we certainly can say that throughout all our struggles, battles, pains and temptation in this broken world.

But what is equally true is I do not know how I would have gotten through that without the body of Christ. It is incredible the encouragement and the help God's people have given to one another for the glory of Christ. We are not only to receive that ministry but seek to give it, and all we have to do is look out. There are so many opportunities every single week to help and encourage others in the Lord. We are to love and be loved by the body of Christ.

And you certainly see that going on in this passage, because look at verse 14 with those thoughts in mind, **“Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there.”** It is apparent that Paul’s life was in danger. And we see that the brothers, or those who make up the new church in Berea take action. Don’t you love that? There are brothers, close family members who care for your soul. And it is describing not just believers but the close relationship we now have with those in Christ in the church. They are brothers in Christ.

I met someone while doing this message who was a biker. His name was Tiny, but he was about 6’7”. He was anything but tiny, but it was incredible because we had an instant bond when we began to talk about Christ. God gives these relationships. And these relationships are based on Christ’s work on our behalf and our relationship with him, that it causes us to love others in a deep way. Think of it. It is dangerous to be associated with Paul. But these individuals not only identify with him but seek to protect him. They are the ones who find a ship, and pay for his passage, and secure his safety. This might seem like a mundane thing, but everything after this in the Book of Acts that Paul accomplishes through the grace of Christ is contingent on his safe departure from Berea. God used these men in a significant way.

Also noticed the attention and persecution is not on Silas and Timothy. Timothy seems to have joined them at this point, missed much of what went on in Thessalonica. Maybe he stayed in Philippi for a time to strengthen the church there. But here is the point. There is still more work to be done in Berea. But it certainly cannot be done by Paul. If he stays his life is in jeopardy, and also those around him are in jeopardy. But Silas and Timothy remain no doubt to strengthen the brethren - to inculcate the truths of Christ in their hearts and lives.

Think of the service of this church because they continue to serve. They are not done being a blessing to the apostle Paul. Look at verse 15, **“Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.”** I find this such lavish care and love, because they just do not send him on his way but they keep caring for him. Sea travel was very difficult in the ancient world. But here they “conducted Paul,” in other words they looked after him until he got to Athens, and then took their leave and went back home. This was a huge undertaking, huge personal cost of money and time. They cared for him in his hour of need. And God used them in a real and significant way. And even after Paul arrives he sends for Silas and Timothy to come as soon as possible because he realize his need of them. He realizes he cannot do it alone. They will end up joining Paul when he gets to Corinth. But he knew the value of other individuals in the body of Christ.

Now let me end with a couple of things. One is gratitude. Think of all the growth that has come into your life. Think of how you have been fortified and strengthened and encouraged in the faith of Christ. If you really think through it, you will see none other than the hand of God working through his people on your behalf. None of us have self-generated growth in our lives. And the encouragement of that is the more we see others, the more we want to be active in body life. The more we want to grow in church life — knowing the people of God — having them active in our lives. When we live in isolation it is incredible whether we realize it or not how stunted our growth becomes.

My plea to you is: see your need of others. There are truths that I know as a pastor, promises of God, truths about Christ that just come to life when I hear it from others. Individuals in the body of Christ minister in real and vital ways in my life for the glory of Christ. Some may not even know they are doing it because it comes so natural but they are involved. It is a humbling but oh such a sweet truth that God has ordained that we need others. We need the hand, foot, heart, fingers, toes, mouths of the body. It is one of the most significant means God has used to cause us to change into the image of Christ. Gratitude for the body of Christ should burst from our souls.

And secondly, we all want and desire many times, especially when we are hurting to have others come alongside of us. And maybe there has been significant suffering in your life where you felt ignored or would have loved someone to come alongside. Maybe the church and others have failed you. And that is my whole point, it is so easy to see what we might not have gotten from others, but how often do we really concentrate on what we should be giving to others? How often are we looking at the needs that happen to be right in the body of Christ? And you might say I don't see any needs, then just seek to be a blessing and encouragement to someone else. Send someone a text or go out to coffee with someone just for mutual fellowship and encouragement. These kinds of redemptive relationships just don't happen but take effort. Think of some things to discuss beforehand, like what you have been reading or studying, maybe ask how you can pray for that person. There are so many ways that we can truly build up the body of Christ. But it does take effort and it does take time.

So look at your life. Look with so much gratitude at the various instruments or people God has used in your life. But realize if you have benefited from the ministry of others God truly desires that you would seek to be an up builder of others for his glory. It is amazing isn't it that God would truly use our efforts for his eternal glory and the welfare of others. He used these believers in the life of Paul and also in the life of this fledgling church. Listen to the charge of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "**Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**" We never know how simple acts and simple words can change the whole course of a person's life, but God knows. Our labour is not in vain, therefore let us all abound in his work for his glory.