

Is The Bible Your Authority? | Acts 17:1-15 | Patrick Miller Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Icebreaker: What's a rule your parents had for you that you didn't understand or agree with but came to see they were right?

Recap

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

As Paul and Silas continue on from Philippi, they encounter two very different reactions in the next two cities they go to: Thessalonica and Berea. These two different responses flow from two different postures toward God's word. The passage today will ask us to consider our own posture to the Bible.

Discussion



Acts 17:1-5

When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said. ⁴ Some

THE **crossing** **small groups**

of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

Note: *Thessalonica, like Philippi, was a Macedonian city and the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. It had been at war with Rome, then sided with Rome. As a result, it was made a free city in 42 BC. Thessalonica was a port-city while also being on the Via Egnatia, a major trade route that also included Philippi. Religiously, there was Roman polytheism, emperor worship, Egyptian polytheism, and a Jewish synagogue.*

1. How did Paul and Silas persuade the Jews and God-fearing Greeks at the synagogue? How might their approach change the way you think about the Old Testament?

Acts 17:5-9

⁵ But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶ But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." ⁸ When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. ⁹ Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

2. How did these Jews demonstrate the difference between claiming the Bible as an authority and actually submitting to it?
3. Luke tells us these Jews were motivated by jealousy—they feared that if people embraced Paul and Silas' message, they would lose their own standing. What kinds of things might we have to be willing to surrender in order to genuinely submit to the Bible?

Acts 17:10-15

¹⁰ As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ¹² As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

¹³ But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring

THE **crossing** **small groups**

them up. ¹⁴ The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. ¹⁵ Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

4. What is more noble about the Jews in Berea?
5. **Test One – Menu or Prescription?** Patrick described one test for whether we are more like the Thessalonians or the Bereans: do we treat Scripture like a menu (optional, choose what appeals to you) or a prescription (non-negotiable, because you know you're sick)? What makes it hard to stay in "prescription" mode? How can we stay in that mode?
6. **Test Two: the Gavel Test.** Patrick used the analogy of a courtroom to ask us who gets the gavel to make the final decision: us or God? What makes it hard to hand that gavel over?

Psalm 107:20

²⁰ He sent out his word and healed them;
he rescued them from the grave.

Psalm 19:8

⁸ The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

7. Why is it ultimately worth it to trust God's word?
8. Patrick closed by saying God's Word doesn't demand moral perfection — it calls us to a *posture* of submission, to repentance, and to walking forward imperfectly. How does that distinction between posture and perfection change the way you think about your relationship with Scripture? Does it bring you relief, challenge you, or both??
9. If we approach God's word as a menu and hold the gavel ourselves, what view of God are we giving to the watching world? What does the world see when we hold a posture of submission instead?

Sharing and Prayer:

Break into groups of 2 or 3.

THE **crossing** **small groups**

- Share one area you have been holding the gavel or treating God's word as a menu and not representing God well. Confess and pray for each other.
- Pray for two people that you would like to come to know Jesus.
- Have someone close the whole group in prayer.

What's ahead?:

- March 22: Acts 17:16-34 (The last in the series and last sermon discussion)
- Lessons for the rest of the semester can be found at this webpage:
<https://info.thecrossingchurch.com/spring-2026-sermon-discussion>