

“Journeys and Destinations – Examine and See”
Pastor Wally Contreras
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“That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived there, they went to the synagogue. And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to check up on Paul and Silas, to see if they were really teaching the truth. As a result, many Jews believed, as did some of the prominent Greek women and many men. But when some Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea, they went there and stirred up trouble. The believers acted at once, sending Paul on to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. Those escorting Paul went with him to Athens; then they returned to Berea with a message for Silas and Timothy to hurry and join him.” (Acts 17:10-15)

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Pastor Wally said that the Scripture contains all the words that God wants me to have. R.C. Sproul has said that “Luther and the Reformers did not mean by *Sola Scriptura* that the Bible is the only authority in the church. Rather, they meant that the Bible is the only *infallible* authority in the church. Paul Althaus summarized the train of Luther's thought by saying: We may trust unconditionally only in the Word of God and not in the teaching of the fathers; for the teachers of the Church can err and have erred. Scripture never errs. Therefore it alone has unconditional authority...*Sola Scriptura* also leads us to the doctrine of biblical sufficiency. To say that Scripture is sufficient is to say that the Bible contains all that we need for determining what we must believe and how we are to live before God. Scripture must be interpreted if we are to understand what we are to believe and how we are to act, but the sufficiency of Scripture indicates that we need no other source of special revelation for faith and life in addition to the Bible...Being equipped for every good work requires understanding the doctrinal foundations of God-pleasing actions and the actions themselves, as is seen in how the New Testament Epistles typically move from presenting doctrine that must be believed to practical application and moral instruction. John Calvin commented on today's passage [“That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”- 2 Timothy 3:17] that to be complete means to be “one in whom there is nothing defective.” To avoid being defective with respect to faith and life, we must study Scripture and put its teachings into practice” and then points out that “We are tempted to look for God's will in places other than the one place He has revealed it—His Word.” How about me? Are there times in my life where I have looked “for God's will in places other than the one place He has revealed it—His Word”? If so, how so? If not, why not?

If the Bible truly does “contain all that [I] need for determining what [I] must believe and how [I am] to live before God”, then does my day-to-day living reflect that belief? Provide examples.

R.C. Sproul said that “we must study Scripture and put its teachings into practice.” What is involved in “studying” the Word of God as opposed to “reading” the Word of God? Explain.

In the last month, how much time have I invested in actually studying the Word of God?

What are some of the hindrances that I tend to encounter when it comes to putting the teachings of Scripture into practice?

Pastor Wally said that the Berean Jews were more “noble-minded” or “open-minded” than the Jews of Thessalonica. John Piper once said, “We are open to changing any of our ideas which can be shown to contradict the truth of Scripture.” How about me? Am I truly willing to have a discussion with someone regarding what it is I believe and enter into the discussion with an open mind? Explain.

Pastor Wally said the Law is not just a list of rules by which to live, but reflects a heart attitude. Consider Paul’s statement in Romans 13:8–10 “Owe no one anything except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” Do I, at times, focus more on trying to figure out who my neighbor is (Luke 10:29) than on figuring out how I will love someone as God would have me love that person (Luke 10:37)?

So, some of the “Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea, they went there and stirred up trouble” a trip of about 50 miles (equivalent to a trip from Gahanna to Zanesville...by foot). Is there anything in my life that could evoke such an emotion in me (get me so “triggered”) that I would walk to Zanesville to express those feelings? If so, what would that be? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally said that Satan is good at what he does and is unrelenting and will stop at nothing to attack me...to make me ineffective for Christ ("Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)) In what way(s), if any, is Satan attacking me? Explain.

Pastor Wally asked me if the Gospel is dangerous. And???

Pastor Wally said that everywhere that Paul went, the Gospel message established "beachheads"...a foothold on an enemy shoreline in advance of an invading force. The interesting thing about a beachhead is that there are no additional resources available until the rest of the invading force gets there...to succeed, it must be self-sufficient. When it comes to sharing the Gospel message with someone like my "Who's Your One" do I trust that the Gospel is truly "self-sufficient" to save or do I feel the need to "reinforce" it in some way and why?

Pastor Wally reminded me that "ours is a spiritual battle; be ready to take every thought captive to Christ"...that our enemy is not the people, but rather it is Satan and therefore we do not respond to people by attempting to fight fire with fire. But, if Satan is attacking us, then there are several possible responses available:

- 1) If the decision is to defend our position against Satan, how do we do that?
- 2) If there is to be a counter-attack, what part will I play and why?
- 3) What might cause Christians to surrender?
- 4) In what way(s), if any, have "believers" attempted to negotiate a truce with Satan?

What does is required in order for me to take every thought captive to Christ?

Do I need a little more "Berean" in me to search the Scriptures "to see if they were really teaching the truth"? If so, how so? If not, why not?