

The Word of Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 April 2024

Preacher: Brian Chesemore

[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Trinity Grace Church, what a joy to be with you this morning. I have watched your videos, videos about your church that have been posted, watched from afar.

I have met your amazing Pastors College students, First Taylor, and his family, and now Gil and his family as they're up in Louisville studying this year in the Pastors College.

I have spent time with your Pastors, and then this week I had the joy of being with numerous leaders from your church, but I would not have been satisfied if I didn't get this experience to be with you all this morning and to see in person what Walt has been bragging about for the last five plus years.

And I have been so encouraged by reports over these years of just his joy, Buddy's joy, Taylor's joy, and you all. But to be here and to worship with you and to see the place in which you meet, to hear you all singing together, to sit under reading of Scripture with you and praying with you, it's such a joy.

[1 : 15] So thanks for letting me be with you this morning, bring God's word to you today. We did laugh hard these last several days, but I was mostly impressed with the fellowship and the care that I observed.

We walked a crazy long hike a few days ago under Walt's excellent leadership. There may have been a complaint or two along the way, but along the way what really stood out was that with all these different pockets of guys walking these seemingly endless miles together, there was a genuine care for one another, a real intentionality in getting to know each other, and I just loved the friendship that I was observing.

So what a joy. And I just want you all to know on behalf of the pastors and members of Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville that we pray for you regularly. It was a privilege to be prayed for this morning by you, Taylor, and with you all.

But we pray for you all as well, and we thank God for what he's doing down here in Athens, Tennessee. And we will continue to pray, and we feel the partnership we have with you.

So thanks for trusting the Lord, laboring in the gospel together, loving one another as a local church. And this morning, what a joy it is to share God's word with you. Please turn to your Bibles, if you would, to Acts chapter 17.

[2 : 36] Acts chapter 17. And I know sometimes that it is hard to just dive into a passage like this and remember what's going on in the storyline of Acts, and we'll get into that a little bit.

But Paul and his team have just concluded a significant experience in Philippi, an experience that had its highs and its lows.

Paul and Silas have experienced a wrongful beating and imprisonment. But then that was followed as they prayed in jail. You may remember the story that was followed by an earthquake from God where they were set free, and Paul's jailer was converted along with his whole family.

And so Paul and Silas then are forced to leave that city. So we come to, in Acts 17, the apostle and Silas, beaten and wounded, yet no doubt encouraged, no doubt encouraged by the conversions and the divine intervention that they had just experienced in the city of Philippi.

So they're walking out of Philippi into fresh ministry territory, not knowing what awaits them as they walk forward. So please read along, listen as I read to you Acts 17, verses 1 through 15.

[3 : 59] Luke writes, Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

And Paul went in, as was his custom. And on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.

And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob.

They set the city in an uproar, and they attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.

And Jason has received them. And they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus. And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.

[5 : 20] And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. And when they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue.

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. 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.

Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea. But Silas and Timothy remained there. 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. May the Lord bless the preaching and the hearing and the doing of his word.

[6 : 30] I love that history is filled with great collaborative works. Great collaborative works in particular of duos.

Walt just talked about the work of two men. Let me tell you about a few more. Wilbur and Orville Wright. Some familiar names I'm sure to many of you. They began their partnership, do you know what they were doing?

Fixing bicycles. But at the turn of the century, their three-axle invention led to a far greater idea and eventual success in inventing and flying the airplane.

And some of you no doubt have recently enjoyed the fruit of their labor. In the history of modern rock, no duo has rivaled McCartney and Lennon in their number of great songs.

Their collaboration literally changed rock and roll and opened up melodies and chord progressions that to this day remain distinctly Beatle-esque to those who hear them.

[7 : 34] You may not know the last names of Cohen and Greenfield. Does that ring a bell for anybody? Cohen and Greenfield? But if I asked you for the brand of ice cream that's named after their first names, you maybe would guess Ben and Jerry.

And no doubt the culinary world is a better place and I'm a happier man because of Ben and Jerry. Great duos. Well, in the advance of Christ's mission, there exists a partnership that is far more sacred than any of those that I just mentioned.

A relationship that when the two lean into each other, the Spirit loves to bless their collaboration. God works through the humble partnership of these two to further his purposes in the hearts of his people, in the building and the health of his church, in reaching the lost, all for his glory, all for the church's joy.

Who is this dynamic duo? Well, this dynamic duo is actually happening right now. It's the relationship of the giving and the receiving of God's word, of preaching and of hearing. Have you ever thought about those as a dynamic duo? Of proclamation and reception? Of a preacher explaining the scriptures and a congregation stewarding that explanation?

[8 : 59] In centuries past, it was known as the sacred relationship between the pulpit and the pew. The pulpit and the pew. As one weak, redeemed and called man preaches and the congregation receives, this dynamic duo is at work.

Eternity is impacted in this relationship between the pulpit and the pew. This is a sacred collaborative work. Well, in Acts 17, we witness how God works to transform lives through the

sacred collaborative work of preacher and congregation.

And where the collaboration is rejected, we witness new illustrations of opposition, of division. And in these two cities, the city of Thessalonica that Paul and his team first went to, and then in the city of Berea, here's what I think God wants us to see.

It's not merely a travel log. It's not only a part of sacred history. But it's a reality that we are to long for as Christians and to experience.

Here's what I think we can take away. The steady advance of Christ's mission is secured as his people devote themselves to the ministry of the word. Let me say that again. The steady advance of Christ's mission is secured as his people devote themselves to the ministry of the word.

[10:31] Healthy churches are devoted to this collaborative work. The ministry of the word and its proclamation, passionately delivered, and the ministry of hearing and receiving and stewarding that word by the congregation.

The Spirit loves to empower faithful preaching. Do you believe that? Well, the Spirit also loves to bless eager and humble reception of the word of God.

So, let's go to Thessalonica. Let's see this play out. In Thessalonica, we observe the steady advance of Christ's mission through Paul's careful proclamation.

If you're taking notes, and it's fine if you're not, but if you're taking notes, here's point one. The pulpit. The priority of Christ-centered proclamation. Paul is really far from home at this point.

And he's about 1,500 miles from where they met for the Jerusalem Council. Probably about 1,100 miles from their sending church in Antioch. With Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria all way far back in their rearview mirror, Paul and his band, they find themselves in the beautiful unfolding of Jesus' final words before ascending.

[11:48] Do you remember when Jesus spoke this to the disciples? He said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

This is like the paradigmatic verse, the theme verse over all of Acts. And then we see Acts unfold and this promise play out. They're moving closer now to what was for them the ends of the earth. And oh, how Paul and his band would have loved to have heard about a place called Athens, Tennessee. And how the gospel was ringing out far beyond the 1,100 miles that they had covered. But upon arrival in Thessalonica, it's the capital of the province of Macedonia. It's the largest and most prosperous city in Macedonia. They engage in what has become Paul's consistent strategy. And that is to find a synagogue of the Jews. This approach, it's not just like this cool new trick that Paul came up with. This emerged from his theology.

[12:53] The gospel came first to the Jews and then spread out to the Gentiles. And he formed his strategy based on God's redemptive plans throughout history.

He went first to his people, the Jews. And he sought to share with them about the risen Christ. And along with those Jews who were there in the synagogue, there were some God-fearing non-Jews in attendance.

Paul's heart is for his fellow Jews to come to know the Messiah the way he has. So for three successive Sabbath days, Paul's seeking to get the most important work done in the lives of all who attend this little synagogue in Thessalonica.

And once Paul enters the synagogue, a very intentional work begins. Luke, in verses 2 and 3 of our chapter, he gives careful attention to Paul's method and his content as he begins his part in this collaborative work.

Did you notice when I read the variety of words designed to describe Paul's communication in the synagogue? Verse 2 says that Paul reasoned with them. Verse 3 says he was explaining and he was proving the things he was saying.

[14:06] Verse 3 says he was proclaiming. Luke is trying to emphasize Paul's clear priority in his ministry. He's not there simply to be a moral example.

He's not there just to provide a public service. Or to intrigue them with secondary matters. Instead, imagine Paul calling for the scrolls, opening them, turning to particular passages, particular scriptures, leaning and relying on the logic and the reliability of God's word.

See, Paul was the guy who was steeped in the scriptures since he was a little boy. He knew the storyline of the scriptures. He knew this scroll was reliable. And prior to conversion, Paul was what we call a Pharisee of Pharisees.

He likely had massive portions of what we call the Old Testament. He probably had massive portions, if not the whole thing, memorized. But when he met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, not only was he dramatically converted to become a follower of Jesus Christ, but his understanding of all that he knew of the storyline of scripture, it took on new meaning and new depths of understanding.

He saw how the glorious storyline of the Old Testament scriptures, they were all fulfilled in Jesus. All the Old Testament stories and events, they were like a giant arrow pointing forward to the coming of this one Messiah, Jesus.

[15 : 42] And so Paul's thinking was now tuned to a Christ-centered understanding of God's word and God's world. And so here in Thessalonica, Paul is in the synagogue, he's meeting with these people, and he's just walking them through his Bible.

And he had learned on the Damascus road that the risen Christ was real. And that he's a Messiah that transforms lives through the preaching of his gospel.

Not any Messiah, but a suffering and dying and rising Messiah. So what Paul did in this synagogue is he set side by side this teaching of the Old Testament and the revelation of a person, Jesus Christ.

And he showed how the one pointed to the other. And how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament teaching. Paul was reasoning. Paul was talking to them. He was explaining.

And not just to check off the box of being a faithful teacher. Paul wanted these people to see and to believe that Jesus was the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament had pointed to.

[16 : 59] Paul understood that the entire Old Testament is in one sense prophetic. It's all like a drumbeat getting louder, anticipating its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ.

You notice that Luke says here that in the midst of explaining and proving, what he was doing is he was showing that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead.

Why this language of necessity? It was necessary for this to happen. Because a careful reading of the Old Testament, it makes it abundantly clear whether we consider the Old Testament's broad themes or we dive into certain passages, we see that there is one coming and it's necessary that he comes to deal with the problem of sin.

The problem that we live in a fallen world, plagued by sin. And we're under the just judgment of God and we need a Savior. We need a Messiah who would come and make all things right.

It was necessary for the Christ. That's a term that means the Messiah, the Anointed One. It was necessary for this one, this important one, to come and to suffer and to die and to rise.

[18 : 15] Almost certainly, Paul was turning to places like Psalm 22. If you've read Psalm 22, maybe you can read it this week. A beautiful psalm, but a psalm that would not make sense apart from the cross.

A psalm that becomes clear as you read it with the cross in view. Then likely, Paul opened the scroll of Isaiah and he took his readers to the stunning revelation of the suffering servant who was to come.

Isaiah 52 and 53. Reading about the one who was pierced for our transgressions, who was crushed for our iniquities.

There, in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, we're taken right up the hill to Calvary. Where we read about the coming Messiah and we see the one who became a substitute for sinners like you and me.

Right there in the Old Testament Scriptures. His death was a necessity because our sin requires just judgment. We need a substitute. One who would bear our sins and bear God's punishment, just punishment and wrath for our sins.

[19 : 33] God's wrath must be satisfied if he's going to be a just God. And so Paul took them to the place where they would understand the seriousness of sin but also the great provision of Jesus, the Messiah.

Paul traveled throughout Macedonia to make this revelation known. To make it clear to those who didn't understand it. And then the apostle surely took them deeper into Isaiah 53 and showed them the glory of the resurrection.

Do you remember this verse in verse 11 of Isaiah 53 where it says, out of the anguish of his soul, the suffering servant's soul, he shall see and be satisfied.

This one who would die in our place would also rise again to newness of life and out of the suffering of his soul, he would look around and see that which was purchased through his death and he

would be satisfied.

Here the language of Gethsemane and the cross leads into the language of the tomb, the empty tomb and Christ's victorious resurrection. And so Paul could confidently say as recorded in verse 3, this Jesus who I proclaim to you is the Christ.

[20 : 47] And in the vindication of the Son and the validating of the success and sufficiency of the sacrifice, God raised him from the dead. So, Paul could say, look, I know him.

I've met him. I saw him on the Damascus Road. Have you seen him? He's prophesied here in the Old Testament. I've seen him in real life. I want you to know him. And that day, that's what happened.

The risen Christ was seen through the proclamation, was believed on through the proclamation. lives were transformed through the proclamation of the gospel.

See, it's good to remember while God sometimes does things like he did in Philippi where an earthquake comes and a jailer's attention is arrested and he's converted, oftentimes, it's through the faithful proclamation, the faithful reasoning.

Far more often, it's through a man proclaiming, a man reasoning, a pastor who opens up the scriptures and simply, in his weakness, describes the glory of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 01] Maybe you're here today and you've come with specific questions that are nagging you. Questions you have about the state of your soul, the relevance of who Jesus is.

Maybe you've grown up hearing about him, but it's still just a story that hasn't really impacted your life. Or maybe you're here today and it's one of the first times you've come to church in a long time and you've got questions.

And maybe you wonder, how does God think about my questions? Does he look down on me for my questions? I think what we see in this passage is if you were sitting across from Paul and Paul represents God, you'd see that there's a compassionate apostle looking to answer your questions. You'd see that there's a God who is patient with us as we seek to understand the most important truths that we could ever wrestle with in this life. Okay? So as a pastor ministers the word and seeks to reason with you from the word, he's representing the heart of God who wants you to see and understand and believe and experience the power of the gospel.

And Paul, out of care, would have sought to persuade you. Not manipulate you, but persuade you. Look to Jesus. Call out to Jesus. Let him be your Lord and Savior this day.

[23 : 27] Let this day be the day of salvation. And here in Thessalonica, whether inside or outside the synagogue, Paul knew what men and women needed to be reconciled to God.

And that's the same message that each of us here today need in order to be reconciled to God, to be forgiven. We need to hear about the one who was long anticipated but now has come.

What's the result of Paul's proclamation? Well, it says right in our passage, some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas. Maybe an expanded version could read some who were dead in their sins, lost and hostile to God prior to Paul's arrival now knew their suffering Savior as Lord. They were persuaded. Paul would later write to this church in the letter we call 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 13. Listen to Paul's letter to these very people who on this day were converted. He says, and we also thank God constantly for this that when you received the word of God which you heard from us you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is the word of God which is at work in you believers.

[24 : 45] Paul's message came just as he prayed it would as the word of God himself. The Thessalonians they were all in. They not only believed Luke tells us that they joined Paul and Silas.

This means that God not only gave them the gift of faith but he brought them into fellowship with Paul and his team. Identification with them a church was starting to form.

It was in its earliest days believers were gathering together around the gospel around the teaching of God's word and the number of those persuaded it broke beyond ethnic Israel.

It says that a great many of the devout Greeks these were Gentiles. They didn't grow up in Jewish teaching. They had attached themselves to the synagogue community in recent years so they were understanding some of the Old Testament but now now they understood Christ.

And it says and not a few of the leading women so many women who carried prominence in the city these were ladies who were getting it done in Thessalonica either on their own or as the wives of high standing men either way these women had funds they had influence they had status and all those can now be leveraged in the most glorious mission the mission of the gospel.

[26 : 07] so Paul's ministry reminds us that this is the need for the church in every age to have pulpits filled with those who proclaim the message of Christ crucified.

if you've been a Christian for any length of time you know what I'm talking about you know how God has grown you up under healthy teaching of his word and maybe you've had seasons where you've been in a church that's not like this one and the ministry of the word was not a high priority and you know you just saw how your own soul languished in those seasons as you needed to be fed the word of God but it wasn't happening it's the steady faithful ministry of the word that shows us Jesus it's the steady faithful ministry of the word that reveals the character of God that reveals the heart of God that reveals his desire to give us his spirit and to walk with us and grow us throughout this lifetime it's the steady faithful ministry of the word of God that shows us the hope of heaven where we are headed where God is taking us through this life into the next it's the steady faithful ministry of the word where we learn about the blessings of salvation like being forgiven being declared righteous with the righteousness of Christ it's the steady faithful ministry of the word that makes all the difference

I thank God for your pastors that they are these type of men who love to bring the steady faithful ministry of the word I experienced the grace of Walt's teaching just this week God's grace through this man faithfully ministering the word these guys labor and they long to serve you faithfully with this book the Bible they love to show you Jesus Christ aren't you so grateful for pastors who stand not on their own authority not on their strength of their personality but on the word of God yes amen well Paul's ministry reminds us of the privilege that it is to sit under such faithful ministry and they do what Paul did in this scene they preach the gospel this isn't a novel thing that Christians and churches do this is the only message that saves sinners this is the only message worthy of serving as the foundation upon which we build churches this is the only message meant to define us as Christians one of the quotes that our senior pastor who has visited you all

C.J. Mahaney from Louisville is one of the quotes that he gave to Sovereign Grace years ago from a guy named David Pryor David Pryor said we never move on from the cross only into a more profound understanding of the cross so may the Lord take all of us deeper into a more profound understanding and devotion to Jesus Christ and him crucified if only this message this passage stopped at verse 4 we might think that Paul had a nice long leisurely stay in Thessalonica ministering the word but that's not what happened not all who heard Paul's insights were convinced and sadly some of them were filled with jealousy so we see happen in Thessalonica what happens so often throughout Acts and so often in the history of the church the faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ is also met with opposition and there's some serious anger that emerges in Thessalonica when the Jews recognize that all the attention is going to this Paul and this Silas and this band of faithful gospel ministers jealousy is what's going on in their hearts

Luke tells us and jealousy is so often the sin that once allowed to fester leads to anger leads to violent intent and actions think of Cain who was jealous and killed his brother think of Joseph's brothers who gladly sold their brother into slavery to be done with his boasting for the Jews here this new allegiance to Paul and Silas was a threat to their prominence and so what started in their hearts does what it always does if not contained it spills over into the streets and so the Jews likely offered some profit or just said enough incendiary words to incite a mob and soon the city was in an uproar over this proclamation of the gospel and under the guidance of these jealous men the mob headed towards the home of a man named Jason he was likely one of those recent converts recently made happy in the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ and given how intentionally he was targeted he was probably the guy housing

[31 : 13] Paul housing Silas on this day but those guys weren't there so they dragged Jason out and the unruly mob did what unruly mobs of every generation and every city and every internet feed do they seek to intimidate they calculate just what needs to be done in order to squash the one who's offended them to satisfy their unrighteous outrage and so accusations come accusations with charges that these men have turned the world upside down and they've come here to our city and they're destabilizing the order of our city well the reality is they were destabilizing Thessalonica they were destabilizing in the sense of many of these people were idolaters many of these people worship false gods and here they are bringing Jesus bringing the good news of salvation charge number two they have loyalists among them Jason and these others well what were these loyalists these evil loyalists doing well they were simply people hearing the gospel believing and becoming church members charge number three they're all acting against the decrees of Caesar saying

there's another king

Jesus this was particularly serious charge this is the charge of sedition a rival king has been proclaimed in Thessalonica these three charges of traveling insurrectionists of local supporters and a message of sedition they had their intended effect verse 8 says and the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things but as David Peterson commentator writes these accusations missed the mark as Paul had never aligned his messianic mission with plots to overthrow Roman rule or incite public disturbances but you see how these accusations could stick and the effect is the magistrates had heard enough Paul and Silas needed to be ejected from the city this is no doubt a very grieving moment for the believers of Thessalonica think of those you love who faithfully ministered the gospel to you were driven out of your town driven out because of mobs who say they must go that's what happened in Thessalonica their beloved father in the faith Paul was driven out indeed we learn from

Paul's later letters in first and second Thessalonians that their labor was not in vain it was not in vain Christ had taken the cross-centered preaching of the apostle and he built something in Thessalonica that would last down through the decades so that night in Thessalonica through tears and tender goodbyes the brothers did exactly what was pledged they left the city of Thessalonica Paul Silas Timothy Luke they were all departing further inland to a place called Berea but they departed having faithfully proclaimed and seen converting grace in Thessalonica now coming to Berea we observe Luke emphasized not so much proclamation but its collaborative partner in the faithful ministry of the word the other side of the dynamic duo in Berea we observe the steady advance of Christ's mission through point two the pew the priority of eager reception we talked about the pulpit let's talk now about the emphasis of this passage on the pew while in Berea it was it was not known for its importance historically or politically but it like Thessalonica had a Jewish synagogue and so the resolute preacher did what he did in every town he found the synagogue I mean this is amazing he's not going to be swayed by the mobs he's not going to be intimidated he knows what he's called to do so he finds the synagogue and he goes in and starts preaching and Luke wastes no time in commending the quality of the listening of the Bereans they were more noble noble particularly in contrast to the jealous Jews of Thessalonica this designation it pointed to their posture towards Paul's teaching Luke tells us they received the word with all eagerness now this is fascinating language this should stand out to us in fact I was talking to a buddy about this passage last night and many of us have heard about the nobility of the Bereans what did they do they searched the scriptures to see if what Paul said lined up with the scriptures maybe you've heard it the commendation let's be like the Bereans what does that mean that means let's be noble like the Bereans let's take the ministry of the word seriously let's take it and let's search the scriptures to confirm if it's true it's fascinating because it's the only such designation in the entire book of Acts their hunger for the word was evident it was the trademark of the listeners in Berea in this synagogue they devoured Paul's teaching but not mindlessly their eagerness was expressed in careful study are you like the Bereans they examined the scriptures daily to see if these things were so the Bereans they went to the sources notice the phrase these things Paul doesn't need to elaborate this time given the tight connection to the events in [36 : 49] Thessalonica but once again Paul's teaching how it was necessary for the Christ to suffer so you can be guaranteed these noble Bereans they're opening up to Psalm 52 they're opening up to Isaiah 53 they're looking at the storyline of the Old Testament they're saying does it point to this one that Paul is telling so they examine the scriptures daily those in the pew if you will they live with their Bibles open their minds engaged their hearts inclined they hold this book in highest esteem are we like the Bereans and as they listen closely they have questions they've never heard of the suffering servant the crucified Messiah who came to save one who now reigns as king they listen carefully they read carefully and the themes and the patterns of sacrifice the prophecies of the Old Testament it all starts to make sense to them and verse 12 is just glorious it says many of them therefore believed do you think your time in the scriptures is important it was the difference maker for the Bereans it's the difference maker for you and me we search the scriptures we see the validity of the claims of the scriptures and we see it all points to one who has come to reconcile us to the living God there is no more important thing that we could wrestle over that we could ask questions about that we could search the scriptures to find out if it's true than this is there one who has come who has come to set me in right relationship with the almighty God is there one who has come to make a way that I might know this God who is holy this God who I have offended through

my sin could there be could there be a Messiah who makes all things right starting with my soul my relationship to God the apostle would later explain 2 Corinthians 4:6 what happened to these Bereans he said for God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ light was shining this day in the previously darkened city of Berea people were coming to Christ in Berea we are reminded that there's tremendous fruit that awaits humble students of scripture we can go through seasons where we take for granted our Bibles where maybe a Bible reading plan just starts to feel like dry work be inspired by what God did in the lives of the Bereans as they searched they experienced light coming in to their darkness search the scriptures in faith and watch the fruit emerge God's spirit gives eyes to see this is what we call the gift of illumination where the light turns on as we read God's revealed word you may recall the prayer of the psalmist open my eyes

I love this prayer I pray this oftentimes in my devotions open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law we get to pray that prayer in relation to the one that the law and the prophets anticipated so we pray father as I study as I study the gospel as I look upon your son Jesus Christ as revealed in the scriptures open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your word Christ who is most glorious Christ who is most worthy of praise show him to me again today by your spirit we read we pray as we read we search and we study the scriptures scriptures so that we might see more of Jesus we read so that we might worship I want to encourage you to pray for the ministry of the word in your church the proclamation that comes from your pastors and the reception that goes on with your brothers and sisters as fellow members of this church pray for those who labor in preaching and teaching and pray for yourself and all those who listen that we might be a people transformed by what we hear and verse 12 glorious fruit of new believers in Berea mirrors the fruit in Thessalonica and another local church is born and that's beautiful but sadly something similar happens to

Thessalonica there's opposition emerging and sometimes opponents of the gospel they just seem to never let up they display a dogged determination to follow faithful gospel ministry and get in its way we shouldn't be surprised by that it happened in the first century it happens in our century false teachers follow they seek to get in the way of gospel proclamation to undermine the ministry of faithful pastors the ministry of the word look at verse 13 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 the strategy sounds strikingly familiar this newly born church is experiencing persecution opposition what do they do they respond in a manner that quiets the opposition but sadly it's another painful separation that follows there's many sad hearts including the apostle Paul as he is needing to leave and to leave immediately but this ministry between the pulpit and the pew it continues now for a time under

[43 : 05] Timothy and Silas they stick around to minister for a short time longer while the apostle was safely and perhaps stealthily conducted to Athens and once in Athens I love that I get to preach this in Athens Tennessee I love it once in Athens Paul seems to have sensed the ripe opportunity for the gospel so he gives a command to some unnamed sacrificial escorts return to Berea guys I need Timothy and Silas bring them to me bring them to me soon and that's what they did and then Luke is simply masterfully taking the accounts of what happened in a city called Thessalonica and a city called Berea and showing us the fruit and effect of faithful gospel proclamation and faithful gospel reception these are the two dynamics that God's spirit uses to this day to advance his mission the mission of the gospel of his son so whether our days are marked by peace or whether they are marked by hostility or some of both more likely here's the collaborative work needed in the church of every age here's the collaborative work needed in

Trinity Grace Church a Christ centered pulpit and a Christ centered congregation that's what's needed and I'm so grateful for how this collaborative work thrives right here in Athens Tennessee I'm so grateful that you love to see Christ exalted I'm so grateful that you're attentive to the ministry of the word because it shows that the spirit of God is at work in your lives so let's be Christians who live with our Bibles open let's be Christians who live with our ears attentive our hearts attentive to the ministry of God's word the reigning Christ he's promised he's promised to build his church but he does so through this dynamic duo through the relationship of proclamation and reception that's how he builds his church between the pulpit and the pew that align the church with his will that engage the church in his mission that position the church for faith for whatever the next phase of the mission entails so we don't know what tomorrow holds do we but we know that

God's word is true we know that we are to be people of the promises we know that we are to be people of this book so let us friends be prayerful for both let's intentionally labor for both may this always and only be a growing reality in your local church and mine to the glory of God's grace the steady advance of Christ's mission is secured as his people devote themselves to the ministry of the word and thank you for being a church that is so devoted let's pray father we thank you so much for these pictures of ministry in Thessalonica and Berea father we thank you for the example of faithful men like Paul and the band of brothers who is with him we thank you for the glorious pictures of lives transformed through the ministry of the gospel in these cities and father I pray that right here in Athens Tennessee the gospel would be ringing forth ringing out in power and that in this church you would be doing a transforming work a strengthening work a building work where Christ is glorified in increasing measure in and through this church and may the gospel proclamation that goes on in this room may it spill out into lives and into the streets of Athens into the towns and cities beyond Lord may it may it go forth in power in Seoul South Korea we pray as members of this church visit father we pray be glorified through the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ proclaimed in his name we ask amen at trinity grace athens dot com