

RECEIVING THE WORD

In Acts 17:11 the Bible says of the people in Berea, "*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*" This is one of the most commendable statements that could be made of anyone. There were many who were unwilling to receive the word. This is also true today. Why is it that so many are not of the attitude of these Bereans who "*received the word with all readiness of the mind?*"

Some do not receive the word because of preconceived ideas and opinions. Many have been brought up in a religious environment where the teaching is not from the word of God but from the creeds and commandments of men. They have become so filled with the teaching of men that they are blinded to the simple truths in God's word. You do not have to be around these individuals very long to recognize that they are not accustomed to speaking "sound words" (2 Timothy 1:13). They may affirm belief in the Bible and respect for the Lord but, like Peter when he denied the Lord, their speech betrays them. The words and expressions they use are far removed from the language we find in the word of God.

You hear them speaking of "accepting Christ as your personal Savior" or of the "personal experience" they have had. They talk of just about everything but that which you can read in the word of God. They even suggest that God reveals Himself to different people in different ways as they read the scriptures implying, if not out right stating, that two people can have conflicting views and both be right. Some teach that the scriptures are so beyond our comprehending that to even suggest we can read and understand them is equivalent to putting ourselves on the level of God.

The problem with all these ideas is that they are in direct contradiction to what God has revealed in His word. Paul told the Ephesians to understand what the will of Lord is (Ephesians 5:17). Was he demanding the impossible? Surely not! The problem is not with the scriptures nor is it a matter of inability to understand. The problem lies within the hearts of men and women. They do not have the "readiness of mind" to receive the word. The word is confusing to them because they try to make the things they read from the Bible agree with all the things they have been taught in religion. They enter into any study assuming they are already Christians simply because they believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They view any study of the Bible as edifying them as Christians. It doesn't even enter into their mind that what they are reading, if received, would demand a change on their part.

Until one is willing to receive the word "with all readiness of mind" they will profit little from a study of the word. There must be an application of that which we learn if we are to benefit from our study.

Don't be deceived by those who try to make following the scriptures something that is so mysterious that you can't really understand what they teach. Don't be led astray by those who spend more time talking about their "experiences" than they do reading from the inspired word. The only way your soul can be purified is in obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22). Jesus is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16). Peter preached Jesus as Lord and Christ to those Jews assembled in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and told them they must "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38).

Those of us who have obeyed these commandments may find ourselves having the same attitude we condemn in others. What about the scriptures that demand godly living, faithfulness in service or withdrawing from those who walk disorderly? Do we sometimes treat these scriptures the same way those in the denominational world treat the scriptures dealing with baptism? Do we ignore these if we find them teaching something different from what we want to believe or do? How ready are you to receive the word?

 James Hahn