

The
ACTS
of the Apostles



The Gospel might offend the
nonbeliever, but it has the
power to save and transform

Acts 17

Introduction

- In this phase of the second missionary journey, we see the Gospel brought to Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens.
- Paul follows a different approach with each group of people.
- His example helps us trust in the power of the Gospel to break through the unique barriers of each person's heart.

Introduction

- We can learn to witness to both the religious and the spiritual types of people we encounter today.
- Even though the response to the Gospel might be one of offense or confusion, God is greater than the frameworks people use to understand Him, and it is often the surprising elements of the Gospel He uses mightily to rescue and redeem the lost.

Believers use the Gospel to
witness to those who are religious

Acts 17:1-16

Thessalonica

- Paul and his team land in Thessalonica to continue spreading the Gospel.
- As usual, they start by speaking to the Jews gathered in the local synagogue.
- We see how Paul witnesses to a group we would call the religious. His audience is comprised of Law-keeping Jews, as well as Greeks who have converted to Judaism.

Thessalonica

- First, Paul reasons from the Scriptures. The Greek word Luke uses here for “reasoned” is the root for our English word dialogue.
 - He dialogues from the Scriptures.
- Second, Paul witnesses by “explaining.” This word means “opening.”
 - Paul opens the Scriptures with clarity and simplicity.

Thessalonica

- Third, Paul witnesses by “giving evidence” of Scripture.
- By using the sacred text that the religious Jews held dear, Paul makes his case for why law-keeping isn't enough and why Christ's work was necessary.
- We can trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to work supernaturally, opening a deeper understanding of truth than can be achieved by a life of good works.

Thessalonica

- Once again, we see a divided response. Some Jews and Greeks respond in faith. Jewish leaders were jealous.
- Keeping the Law, in the Jewish mind, was one of the key ways the world knew that they were the people of God. Hearing that keeping the Law was not enough for salvation created a public uproar.
- They form a mob and attack the house of Jason.

Thessalonica



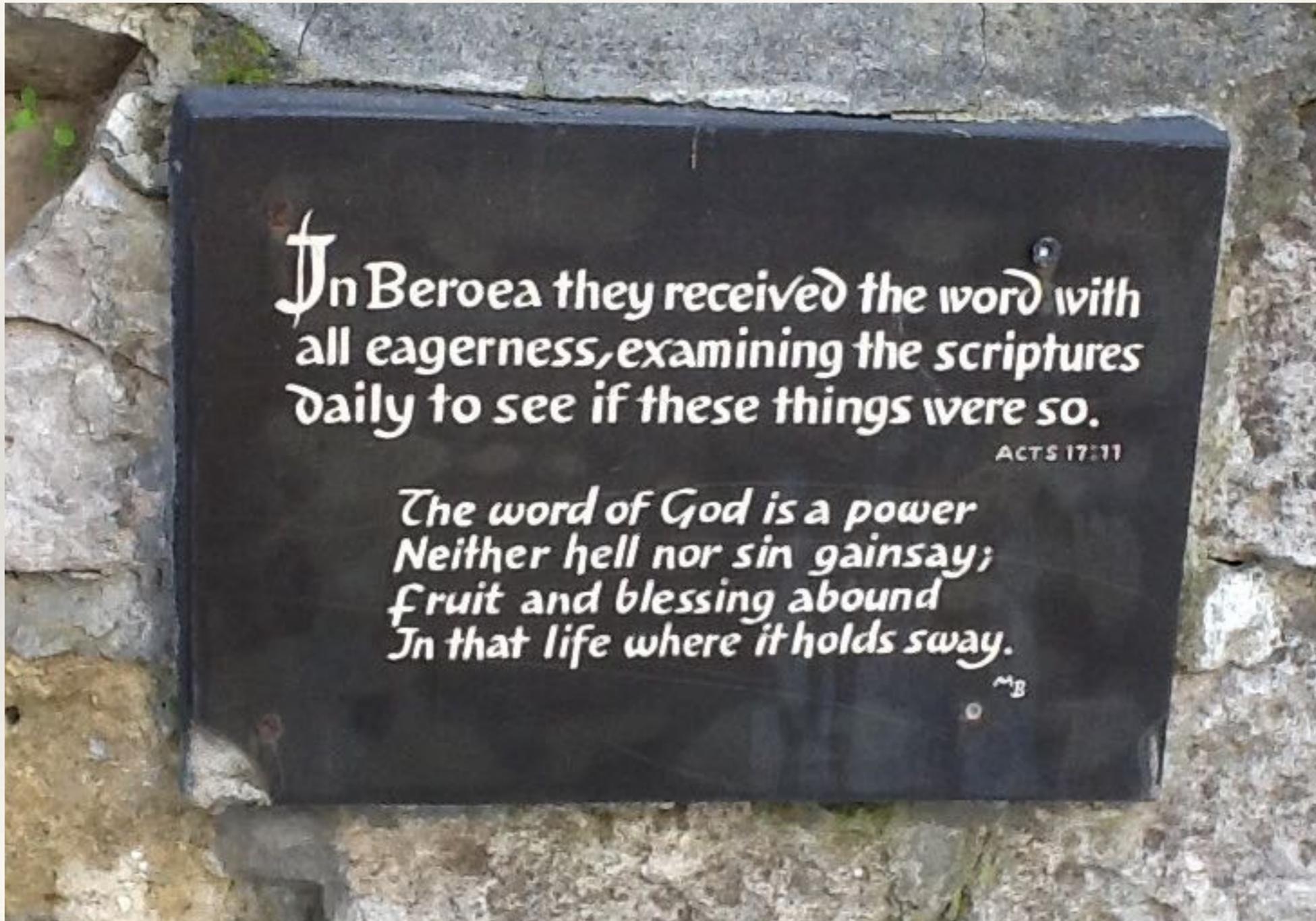
Berea

- In Berea, they once again start in the synagogue to preach Christ.
- Luke tells us that these Jews are “more noble” than the Jews Paul and Silas encountered in Thessalonica.
- They compare everything they hear with Scripture and are open and eager to examine what Paul and Silas preach and see if it lines up with their sacred text.

Berea

- The Jews who were stirring things up against the apostles in Thessalonica now follow them to Berea and do the same.
- To continue the spread of the Gospel and move past the opposition, Paul is sent to Athens.
- After settling in, Paul sends for Timothy and Silas, and they also head to Athens.

Berea



Believers use the Gospel to
witness to those who are spiritual

Acts 17:16-34

Athens

- As Paul walks the streets of Athens (the intellectual center of the world) he's in a different context.
- He has stepped into the world of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno.
- It is a city is full of idols to various gods (30,000 statues in a town populated by only 10,000 people). Paul is distressed to see a city imprisoned by its idolatry.

Athens

- After teaching in the synagogue, Paul is pulled aside by some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who want to hear more of his message because it is something they have not encountered before.
- Epicureans believed that all of life is chance, and there is no afterlife. Therefore, you should pursue pleasure.
- Stoics believed whatever happened in life was unavoidable destiny and lived in apathy.

Areopagus

- Paul stands before the Areopagus, the Council of Ares (Mars) and is no longer surrounded by Jews.
- The pagan Athenians might have been interested in various religions, but they are not religious when it comes to keeping rules.
- They are more interested in trendy knowledge and philosophy, which is why they have such interest in Paul (a visitor with a new story).

Areopagus

- Paul was most likely speaking on Mars Hill.
- He would have been surrounded by thousands of statues looking down on him, as he addressed the philosophical elite of Athens.
- First, he starts with a compliment. “In every way you are very religious” (verse 22).
- Paul gives them credit for that and finds common ground with them as worshippers.

Areopagus

- Second, he references something from their own culture as a starting point.
- He chooses an altar he saw as he strolled the streets, one that referenced an “unknown” god.
- Paul points directly to their problem. Though they, as Athenians, were supposed to know everything, they were clearly without knowledge about the one true God of the universe.

Areopagus

- Third, Paul uses this lack of knowledge as a bridge to bring up God.
- He first describes the Creator (verse 24). What's most striking here is that He does not start with the Law or the prophets. His hearers are not familiar with the Jewish scriptures.
- Paul starts from the beginning: God created everything in the world (verse 24) and isn't an image or idol.

Areopagus

- God forms us in His image (verse 25) and He directs the entire course of history (verse 26).
- Furthermore, God seeks out these people through Christ's death and Resurrection (verse 27).
- Paul even uses one of the Greeks own famous poems to communicate these things (verse 28).

Areopagus

- At the mention of resurrection, some mock. Greek philosophy did not have high regard for the human body. Others respond in great joy, repenting and believing in Christ (verse 32).
- Though a few believe, many do not, due to the general unbelief of the people and current philosophical norms of the day (verse 34).

Athens



Athens

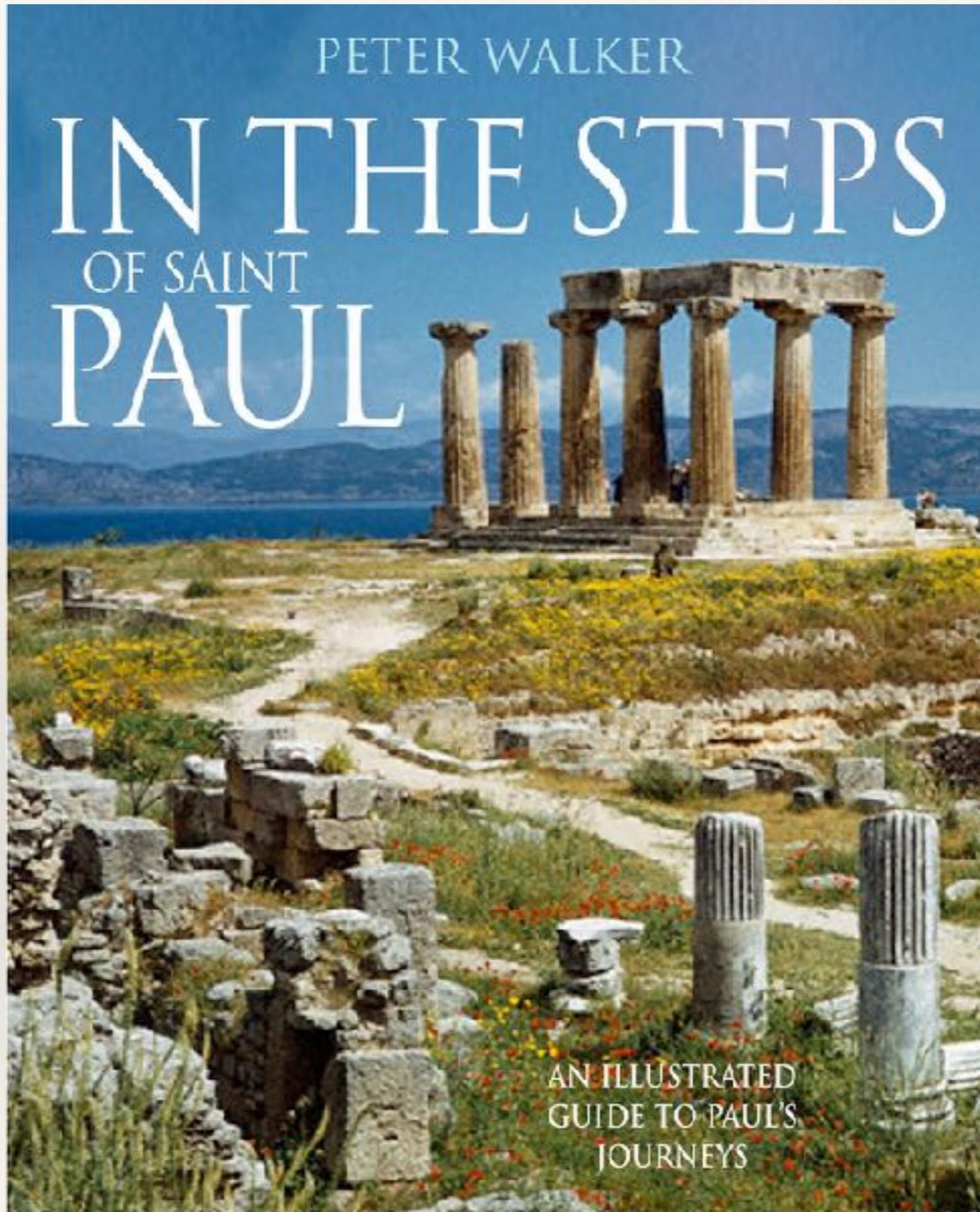


Athens



PETER WALKER

IN THE STEPS OF SAINT PAUL



AN ILLUSTRATED
GUIDE TO PAUL'S
JOURNEYS