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NOBLE BELIEVERS

Mario Dučić,
July 2006

„Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.

*When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.“ **Acts 17:10-11***

According to Apostle Paul, noble believers are believers who receive the word with readiness; with an open mind and who have a child-like reliance on Lord and their leaders whom He has put in their lives to help them grow as true disciples.

It is often easy and pleasant to teach such believers the Word of God because they receive it with readiness

and often rapidly grow spiritually because of their sincere desire to listen and do the Word of God. After they become converted, they swiftly give up their sinful habits and way of thinking so that it takes no time at all before they reach their full potential in Lord. Immediately they find their place in Christ's body and serve Him faithfully.

According to apostle Peter, noble believers are those who: *“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the unadulterated milk (“pure milk of the word,” - NKJV) that you may grow thereby...” (1 Peter 2:2)*

★ **Noble believers are believers who receive the word with readiness.**



The need for milk is a baby's innate instinct and signals a desire for the food needed for growth. The noble believer will always grow in Lord because they daily depend upon the Word of God as their spiritual milk. Their belief is child-like which is the attitude we should have toward Jesus if we want to enter the Kingdom of God.

There are ignoble believers as well but I am not going to talk about them too much, only to illustrate the antithesis of noble believers.

I believe that ignoble believers cannot enter the Kingdom of God because they are not child-like in character. Jesus Christ clearly stated that our attitude towards Him should be that of dependence if we want to be with Him: "*Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*" **(Luke 18:17)**

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They doubt the motives of those around them; they are not open-minded but rather are very critical and self-righteous toward their leaders in spiritual things. They become an obstacle against spiritual growth for many people by often resorting to slander and negative opinions.

Apostle Peter in his first pastoral letter (**1 Peter 2:1**) gives a very good description of them saying: "*all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking*", because they do not long for spiritual milk which brings maturity.

Ignoble believers are a thorn in the flesh for pastors. We must beware of them because they are manipulative and dangerous if they are in a place of spiritual authority. But let us go back to the text and look at some of characteristics of noble believers, for this is our aim – to be of noble blood.

▶ **1. NOBLE BELIEVERS RECEIVE THE WORD OF GOD WITH READINESS**

„ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness...“
(Acts 17:11)

Greek word for „noble“ is eugenes, which means: „well-born, high positioned, generous, noble.“ In other words when the Apostle Paul *“...reasoned with them from the Scriptures“* in synagogue “explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead” (**Acts 1:2-3**), they readily received the Word; they were born-again into nobility! I personally believe that there are believers who go to church and yet do not receive the Word readily; they are not sincerely born-again rather they only adopt certain Christian clichés while continuing in their old lifestyle.

One translation says that they received the Word with an „open mind“ (NKJV). Open-minds are what pastors are longing for because it is the only way to make disciples. “God please open the minds of the people!”

It is unbelievable how spiritual babies in Christ, who are immature and only months old in the Lord, have closed their minds and fall into rebellious behavior.

Let us imagine this situation: a baby tells you to leave him alone because he knows everything; he criticizes

the choice of food or milk, wants to educate his parents, and self-righteously refuses their care. How long would that baby survive? Would he grow and mature, as he should?

I have mentioned time and again that the church is filled with believers who are not fully converted because either the Word was not presented well to them or they did not receive it readily; taking only the parts of Scripture suitable to their temporary situation or problem.

Jesus did not die to release you from your temporary sickness or critical financial situation; He wants to have a long-term and quality relationship with you, to teach you and make you able to extend His Kingdom!

According to my pastoral experience, it is impossible to make ignoble believers into precious vessels because they are self-sufficient and do not allow

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anybody to shape them. They do not like the instruction from their Creator given through His church.

The Jews who lived in Thessalonica are a good example of ignoble believers; they heard the Word but simply rejected it. There were some noble ones among them who accepted the Word: *“And some of them were persuaded ... and ... joined Paul and Silas” (Acts 17:4)* *“But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.” (Acts 17:5 - NKJV)*

This is what the believers who are not fully born-again do. Rather than receiving the Word of God and keeping His commands they often, out of envy, gather around them others like themselves. There is a Greek word for these kinds of people, *“poneros”*, and

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describes evil people in spiritual and moral sense. These congregations because they have nothing to do; they are lazy, create problems by raising doubts about their pastors and leaders, and generate negativity about the church.

They are full of envy and gossip; and while they shout “amen” during the sermon, they run home and call their disciples to comment on what they heard; the truth that they were not able to receive.

They are not teachable because they already know everything there is to know.

We do not want to be like them, do we? How, then, should we behave when we hear the Word?

We are noble believers when we readily receive the Word of God, ask questions in order to learn something, and act upon It. We are noble when we willingly listen to instructions from our pastors or leaders, apply the Word, and actively change accordingly. We are noble when we are full of joy and gladness, when we have confidence in the leadership, and serve without mumbling; when we have open minds and child-like faith, a faith that is dependant, that holds, and is not swayed by negativity.

These are the believers in whom the seed of the Word of God fell; they have good soil and bear fruit; they are not unfruitful trees but are those with fruitful hearts that constantly bear good fruit: "But *he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*" (**Matthew 13.23**)

Noble believers are not those who doubt the motives of their pastors; who criticize and firmly refuse the message given them, but receive it as a word from God rather than from man. When the Word is taught it is important to know that it is not a word from the pastor but God; it should be taken seriously, as it is.

We sometimes use to refuse the Word because there is something about the pastor we do not like, yet we are not refusing a word from the pastor, we are refusing the very Word of God; if we do not receive It with readiness we will not mature in Christ.

This is why Paul thanked the Thessalonians because they have received the Word as from God not

as from a human: "*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*" (**1 Thessalonians 2:13**)

Does your pastor thank God when he thinks of you? Does he speak with pride about your dedication and faith?

Noble believers always readily receive instruction through the Word of God and His authorities.

► **2. NOBLE BELIEVERS DEPEND ON WORD OF GOD EVERY DAY**

"... *they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to **find out** whether these things were so.*" (**Acts 17:11**)

It is sad to see empty, non-underlined Bibles. Unfortunately, some believers often use the Bible only to find verses for their own personal benefit.

★ **The Bible is God's Word for us and we should conform our lives accordingly.**



Sometimes we skip over certain biblical principles that would be the very solution to our problems while we say that these principles were valid in the past but are not for today; or, we stubbornly cling to that which suits our fancy, ignoring altogether what the Word of God has to say. Yet, the noble believers are as the believers in Berea who searched the Scriptures.

In China believers struggle for just one copy of the Bible while those of us in the west have several translations yet are too lazy to take it with us to church, much less read it every day. How much does the Bible mean to us?

As opposed to the believers in Berea, the believers in Thessalonica stirred up the masses out of jealousy and attacked those who shared the Word, not because they searched the scriptures and found error, but because they did not search the Scriptures at all.

Those who are ignoble believers often criticize; they have their own philosophy and view of Christianity without confirming it with the

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Scriptures. They are led by their emotions, humanistic views, and neglect the word of God in full. If you ask them to recite the Scriptures and confirm their actions, they think that you are over spiritual.

The Bible is God's Word for us and we should conform our lives accordingly. In our conversations with others often we will despise those who lead unstable lives and yet quote the Scriptures, but if we have well-ordered lives and yet know not the Word of God we are blind, wander on our own while opposing those who stand firm on God's Word. The Bible is eternal and does not change: "*Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.*" **(Ps 119:89)**

Isaiah said: "*The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.*" **(Isaiah 40:8)**

The Scriptures is food for our soul. Jeremiah said: „ *Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.* " **(Jeremiah 15:16);**

"How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts, I get understanding; Therefore, I hate

every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. “(Ps 119:103-105; 130)

In **Deuteronomy 4:10**, when Moses repeats the instructions given by God, we see that God’s people searched out and read the Word of God: *“especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children. “*

“You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up...”
(Deut 11:19)

Noble believers search the Word of God and depend on it. One unknown author said that the Bible is not only for information but also for transformation. If you search the Word, it will change you; it is not enough to read it only once. It is our daily food and we should be *homo unius libri*, as John Wesley said: „A man of one book.“

▶ **3. NOBLE BELIEVERS BELIEVE IN GOD**

„ Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. “ (Acts 17:12)

One of the characteristics of noble believers is that they joyfully, with a child-like faith, believe in God and those He has placed around them to guide and lead them. They are full of hope and do not despair, because they know the initiator of their faith. However, ignoble believers are pessimistic because of envy and do not believe that God will bring about change in people’s lives. Because they do not know Him well enough, and His word, they do not have firm reliance upon Him.

On the outside, they have the appearance of a godly man, but on the inside are full of fear, uncertainty and need for constant confirmation of their virtues for the sake of insufficient self-acceptance. They rely on their own capabilities but as Solomon say: *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding. “*
(Proverbs 3:5)



To rely on means to put all the weight of something or to lean something and believe in that person or thing in which we rely or lean.

Noble believers rely on the Lord in all their decisions because they know that the Lord knows what is the best for them. They believe Him in everything! They are always willing to hear and be corrected according to the Word of God.

As the Jews in Berea were willing to accept Messiah, so the noble believers are willing to change those areas in their life that do not align according to the Word of God. In other words, they are open for change and growth while others, according to one translation, are the *“Jews who were not persuaded”* (**Acts 17.5**)

Noble believers believe in God; they are often visionary and optimistic while ignoble believers are often are aimless

and live only for the present moment; any goals they may have are bound to their selfish wishes and wrong motives.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (**Heb. 11:1**)

Do you want to be rid your envy, unbelief, self-righteousness, and rebellion to become a noble believer? If yes, take this word readily, repent and leave behind your old sinful habits, give yourself completely to Jesus! Read His Word and act accordingly! In this manner, you will become a noble believer!

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