

The "therefore" in v12 gives indication that the faith of *many* Jews, as opposed to "a few" in Thessalonica, was due to their (1) "nobility", (2) "their examination of the Scriptures", and their (3) "eager reception" of the Word of God.

### 1. The Bible Evaluates Us First

- a. "Noble" here seems to indicate an openness to learn from the Scriptures, as opposed to a bias due to power
- b. “ευγενής” – well-born, i.e. the way a person is supposed to be (good genes)
  - i. Open to the Truth
    1. Willing to evaluate and weigh and discern wisely
    2. with a willingness to be corrected pertaining to prejudice or bias
  - ii. It is where the name Eugene is derived
    1. If God would make us truly seekers of Truth with an open-mindedness to the declarations of God in this city!
- c. This willingness to be corrected by the Bible is based upon a presupposition, however, which is that the Scriptures are the Truth which judges our conclusions of Reality
  - i. There is a “bright line” between Real and False, and it is what God has revealed within history, recorded and explained by men divinely guided in their thinking and writing by God
  - ii. Presupposition #1: God is a self-revealing God
    1. Gen 1:3, “And God said...”
    2. Heb 11:6, “must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek him”
    3. Isa 44:8, “have I not told you from of old and declared it?...Is there a God besides me? There is no other sheltering Rock; I know not of any.”
  - iii. Presupposition #2: The Scriptures are His very word
    1. 2 Tim 3:15-17 – “the result of God speaking is the infallible Scriptures”
      - a. “all Scripture”
      - b. “God-breathed”
      - c. “useful for teaching, correction, reproof, and training in what is right”
    2. 2 Peter 1:20-21 – “the how he did it”
      - a. “Men spoke” – verbal inspiration
      - b. “they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” – literally, ‘taken up and conveyed to the goal of the Holy Spirit’
      - c. “so no interpretation belongs to man”
- d. Verbal-Plenary (All)
  - i. Verbal
    1. The words of the Scriptures are God-breathed. Such inspiration is not limited to concepts, ideas, or principles, but the words themselves.
  - ii. Plenary = ALL
    1. All Scripture is God-breathed. There is no basis for partial inspiration or degrees of inspiration.
  - iii. Confluence
    1. God spoke through human persons and human words. We must not deny either the human participation or the divine oversight.
    2. “Men spoke” AND “taken and conveyed by the Holy Spirit to his goal”
      - a. This is why each author has their own style, yet each is divinely guided by the same Holy Spirit of God

### 2. Is My Heart and Mind *Correctable* by God’s Word?

- a. Are our hearts willing to be corrected by the Word of God even when the teaching flies in the face of our culturally acceptable normative values?
  - i. This nobility, or open-mindedness, comes from a deep mistrust of our own heart’s valuation of things and a deep trust in God’s valuation of things which are revealed to us by Himself

- b. Danger of Heart Embarrassment in the light of God's Word
    - i. We avoid many passages of Scripture because they embarrass us – we don't know how to hold the Word to be accurate and true and hold the values which we have received from our culture
    - ii. Therefore, even while holding to the import of Scripture and to the sufficiency and supremacy of God's Word, we may functionally "cut out" such Scriptures by ignoring them, hiding them, or dismissing them as "culturally contextualized"
      - 1. Sexuality and gender roles, for example
      - 2. Cultural values and sins exposed in every culture
        - a. Western – love your neighbor valued, sexuality is backwards in the Bible
        - b. Middle-Eastern – biblical sexual ethic is valued, love your enemy is backward
        - c. Eastern – wisdom and knowledge is valued, attachment to others is backward
      - 3. The point is that God's Word evaluates every culture and condemns it on some points and condones others
        - a. This correction of every culture is actually very strong evidence that the Word of God is not a culturally originating book – it is super-cultural
  - c. Danger of Incipient Judgment in the light of God's Word
    - i. A particularly wicked form of this is when a preacher gives formal submission to the Scripture, but does so in a way which makes himself look better than God's Word itself
      - 1. For example, one may say, "Well, we've come to Matthew 22:1-14 this morning, and Jesus says some pretty shocking things about hell and punishment. Frankly, I hate these passages, and I wish they weren't in my Bible. But, they are, so we can't ignore them. Let's get through these as quickly as we can."
      - 2. This casts the preacher as more compassionate than Jesus and less offensive.
        - a. Contrast this preacher with Paul: "Since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in God's sight." (2 Cor 4:1-2)
      - 3. "When there's something in the Word of God that I don't like, the problem is not with the Word of God. It's with me." - R.C. Sproul
  - d. Danger of Mercy Blindness in the light of God's Word
    - i. We fear that the Scriptures *only* condemn us and have no promise suitable to our situations, so we don't entrust ourselves to it
    - ii. But the grace of God, without neglecting His revelation of holiness and the depravity of our wickedness, is the constant theme of His Word
      - 1. He holds guilt to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>, but shows merciful love to the 1000's
      - 2. It is His nature, how He has revealed Himself, even in His own name given to Moses, "I am that I am with you", i.e. "I am the covenanting eternal God"
    - iii. "A fixed, constant attention to the promises, and a firm belief of them, would prevent solicitude and anxiety about the concerns of this life. It would keep the mind quiet and composed in every change, and support and keep up our sinking spirits under the several troubles of life....Christians deprive themselves of their most solid comforts by their unbelief and forgetfulness of God's promises. For there is no extremity so great, but there are promises suitable to it, and abundantly sufficient for our relief in it." ~Samuel Clark
3. Do the Scriptures *Truly* Teach What is Being Claimed?
- a. "Examination" indicates that manner of their "nobility"
    - i. They weren't merely taking Paul's word for it, but neither were they immediately rejecting his reasoning because it didn't fit their current understanding.
  - b. We need to let the Scriptures rule us, as the functional authority over our understanding of God, of ourselves, and of Creation

- i. By “functional”, I mean to distinguish between a formal affirmation of this principle and a functional, or living submission to this principle
- ii. There are a number of dangers in this functional category:
- c. Beware the “many possible interpretations” argument as determining the validity of such possibilities
  - i. Simply because an interpretation is possible, does not make it either probable, justifiable, tenable, or actionable
    - 1. For example, it is possible that the Roulette ball will fall on the number 19, therefore it is just as valid to bet on 19 as it is to bet on red.
      - a. No, it’s not.
      - b. Regarding this, of course, we believe that God can ‘see the cards’ so to speak, and tells us what number is up
  - ii. “Five views on ‘x’” all presented as Scriptural arguments, when there is not necessarily equal clarity or import regarding “x”
    - 1. Not all Scriptural revelation is *equally* clear, but that does not mean that it is all equally *unclear*, either
    - 2. Example: 5 views on the Millennium or 5 views on modes of baptism vs. 5 views on the nature of Christ or 5 views on God’s eternity
    - 3. There are areas in the Bible where there is room for disagreement on particular doctrines, but there are also areas where there is no room for disagreement and towards which the Bible reserves the title “false-teaching” which is to be rejected outright
- d. Beware the “uncertainty = invalidity” principle
  - i. Certainty is not a vice when it is submitting to the Scripture
    - 1. Also recognizes that some things remain a mystery, not all things are mystery – some are revealed for our us and for our children (Deut 29:29)
  - ii. Scripture is adequately clear, even if not fully comprehensible
    - 1. The argument for ‘fuzziness and therefore uncertainty and therefore the claim that it is inappropriate to draw hard lines between right/wrong, good/evil, righteous/wicked’, having gained ground in the post-modern so-called emergent or emerging church, is not new
    - 2. The Council of Smirnius during the Arian controversy also made the same claim, prohibiting those discussing the deity of Christ from using the technical terms “*homoousios*” and “*homoiousios*” (of the same substance vs. of similar substance)
      - a. This course was taken by appealing to the mystery and unknowability of such a thing as the nature of the Christ
        - i. The argument is that if one cannot know something *comprehensively*, then we cannot know it *truly* enough to distinguish it from any other claim
        - ii. This is simply false.
          - 1. For example, do I know Katie *comprehensively*?
          - 2. But can I know her *truly*?
            - a. Would she expect me to know her truly and act accordingly?
            - b. Would it honor her to say to her that since I cannot know her comprehensively, then I shouldn’t distinguish her from other women?
          - 3. God has not called us to understand everything comprehensively, but to believe what he says
        - iii. This is ultimately an attempt to loose humanity from the guilt of recognizing the depravity of our desires so that we can do whatever our hearts desire without fear of the Lord
      - b. “Practically speaking, the claim of dogmatic ignorance, ostensibly arising from Scripture’s lack of clarity, criticizes Scripture while allowing people to adopt the positions they want.” (D.A. Carson)

- iii. There is no greater category in which we see this tendency than the category of sexual ethics today
    - 1. The claim is made (currently by Brandon and Jen Hatmaker, for example) that the Bible is unclear about any condemnation of homosexual behavior, therefore it is acceptable to God
      - a. Without getting into the biblical arguments over this issue, particularly how Paul uses Leviticus 18 to define his terms in 1 Corinthians 6, condemning such behavior as sinful (along with numerous other sins, including pornography and greed)
      - b. The point is the interpretive method of a lack of clarity which they depend upon is a wax nose to be shaped however we want
    - 2. Now, they also claim that it is only justified within a monogamous consensual relationship
      - a. One must ask, however, why monogamy is more clear than normative heterosexuality according to such interpretative rules?
      - b. In other words, if the Creation of two genders in the garden, for the purpose of pro-creation and to reveal the image of God in the two-gendered union of man and wife is not normative for the sexual biblical ethic, than why is the singularity of a one-to-one monogamous relationship normative?
        - i. Why not polygamy or polyamory or even incest (provided contraception to avoid genetically abnormal progeny)?
        - ii. Where is the consistent hermeneutic?
        - iii. Does this claim not simply show that the basis for such an argument is not really the Scriptures, but one's own cultural bias reforming the Scriptures as one sees fit?
  - iv. What we find is that this jettison of functional Biblical authority on what it clearly states is never really an issue of "that was only for that specific time", but rather an excuse to escape the offense of the Bible to our own cultural sensibilities and free us from the embarrassment of what God has said in the midst of a culture who rejects it
  - e. Sometimes we let our theology, which should be derived from and corrected by Scripture, functionally rule our interpretation of Scripture
    - 1. We call this *eisegesis*, or "reading a theological point into the text which it is not saying here"
      - a. For example, is it possible that my earlier point about the infallibility of Scripture is not what the Bereans were depending upon?
      - b. Ah, you see, because you may agree with me, you may not have even seen that it was a theological point assumed in the text, but not directly addressed there (so I had to address some other passages, which I did!)
      - c. Thus, there is a danger of eisegesis there. The main point of this Acts 17 passage is not the infallibility of the Scriptures, but submission to it as noble.
    - 2. If we submit to the Scripture as our source of Truth, then we must submit to what the Bible is *actually* saying in a particular passage
4. Is a Claim Consistent With *All* That the Scriptures Have to Say About It?
- a. The Bereans searched the Scriptures *daily*
    - i. This was not a cursory evaluation, looking for proof-tests pro or con
    - ii. It was an exhaustive, comprehensive, contextual, honest look at all of the Scripture
      - 1. Paul reasoned to persuade
      - 2. They verified before they entrusted themselves to such an interpretation
  - b. Beware an appeal to selective evidence
    - i. The Health/Wealth/Prosperity 'gospel' or the "Word-Faith" movement does this all the time
      - 1. Appealing to a few verses about prosperity and adding in some texts about being children of the king, they build an entire militaristic movement while

functionally avoiding the Scripture's commands to take up your cross, the perfection of God's grace through weakness, rejoicing that we are blessed to suffer for His sake, etc.

2. These are so egregious that it is fairly easy to spot them, but there are types that are less easy for us to see in ourselves
  - ii. We functionally do this in order to avoid uncomfortable debates, disagreements, or even offense
    1. Because one of the growing definitions in our culture is that to express disagreement is actually to do harm, we tend to be silent where the Scripture is not
    2. Hoping that difficulties will just go away, we simply refuse to talk about disputed matters like racism, poverty, same-gendered marriage, gender dysphoria, the distinctions between male and female, etc.
      - a. The reality is, however, that silence does not make things go away
      - b. It simply makes it more likely that most of the church will simply pick up the world's thinking and values regarding them
    3. While not wanting to be combative, we also don't want to be cowards
5. If the Scriptures Truly Teach it, Then Am I *Functionally Believing* It?
- a. "received the word with all eagerness"
    - i. "προθυμια" – first (*pro*) + desire (*thumia*), i.e. the highest priority of desire
      1. They "craved" the gospel, so they received it with "all priority of desire"
      2. As they discovered daily the fulfillment of God's great culmination of revelation in Christ Jesus – they received it with great eagerness
        - a. The revelation of God's story, in each chapter bleeding with blood of Christ Jesus and every book ringing with the triumphant shout of the open tomb
        - b. This discovery, or rather the uncovering by the Spirit, of the supremacy, the sufficiency, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus
    - ii. Anything which diminishes our "trembling at the Word" is, therefore, to be avoided
      1. Isa 66:2
  - b. Many things can sap our ability to tremble before God's Word, and common to them all is arrogance and self-righteousness, the root of the jealousy which drove the Thessalonians to violence against the Word
    - i. Which is why they came to Berea "when they heard that Paul was preaching the Word of God"
      1. It was the Word which aroused their wrath because it was arrogance which refused to submit to it
  - c. It is this self-dependence and the feelings of self-sufficiency which blind us to our need to keep reading, to re-read again, to meditate and ponder upon God's revelation of Himself through His Word
    - i. This is very difficult to do without a deep honesty, humility, and faith in God's Word and deep mistrust of our own righteousness, strength, and power

How, then, shall we be so humble?! We behold the cross and resurrection of Christ Jesus. In them the story declared by God shows us that we are so wretchedly sinful that Jesus, the very son of God, had to come down and die for you. AND it also declares that you are so wonderfully loved by God that Jesus DID come down and die for you. AND it gloriously declares that you can be so wistfully hopeful because Jesus is raised from the dead so that your suffering now has meaning and glory promised to it when he returns to make all things new. So, sit at the feet of God and listen to his story, submit to it, be moved by it, and walk in a manner worthy of this great glory to which you have been called. Be a true Eugenian, nobly submitting to the Truth which God has revealed, the way you and I are supposed to be.