

The Basics of the Berean Trusts

No.1. Why the Name? pp. 121, 122

“The *What Expositor?*” is the frequent response to the question, “Would you like to read a copy of *The Berean Expositor?*”. Few have heard the word *Berean*, even less know that it is a place mentioned in the Bible and less still are aware of its significance (Acts xvii. 10, 13 and xx. 4).

Berea was a town in Greece, towards the south of the Roman province of Macedonia. It was situated on the eastern slope of the Olympian mountain range, about 35 miles west of Thessalonica. The town is still in existence today, with the name Veroia, and is on the main road linking Athens, in the south of Greece, and Thessaloniki in the north.

When we read the Acts of the Apostles the journeys of Paul seem so familiar and yet we can so easily miss one outstanding feature, the opposition of Paul’s own people, the Jews. At the beginning of his first missionary journey, at Paphos, he met opposition from a Jew named Elymas (Acts xiii. 6-12). From there he went to Antioch, via Perga, and as was his custom he went first to the synagogue of the Jews but “on the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying” (Acts xiii. 44, 45). “They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region” (verse 50).

From there they journeyed to Iconium “but the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds” (xiv. 2). This led to a plot to ill-treat and stone Paul and Barnabas (verse 5), who fled to Lystra but even there “some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead” (verse 19).

It seemed as if things were to be no different on Paul’s second journey. At Thessalonica “the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some of the bad characters from the market-place, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd” (xvii.5). But, “as soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea” (xvii.10). However, here we find a different story:

“On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men” (Acts xvii. 10-12).

How encouraged Paul must have been. At Berea he found Jews who “received the message with great eagerness”, Jews who “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what he said was true”, Jews who believed.

Do we read the Acts of the Apostles and note how Paul testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ. He based his arguments upon the Law of Moses and the Prophets (e.g. xxvi. 22 and xxviii. 23). The foundation of his case was the Scriptures, and the Jews knew their Scriptures, but note how frequently they opposed him. Only of the Bereans was it said that “they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true”.

So it is that this Bible study magazine is called *The BEREAN Expositor*. It is hoped that all who read it do receive the message “with great eagerness”, with all readiness of mind. It is hoped that every reader will examine the Scriptures regularly to see if what is written in *The Berean Expositor* is correct. No writer can claim to have the apostolic authority of Paul and so human error can creep in. The Bereans were highly commended for searching and checking on Paul, the Apostle. How much more, then, should people today examine the Scriptures to search and see if what we say is true.

All quotations in this article are taken from the New International Version (N.I.V.).

For further reading on this subject we recommend
The History and Aims of the Berean Trust by Michael Penny and
Why Berean? By Stuart Allen.

No.2. What! No Membership? pp. 141, 142

Most Christian organizations have both a statement of faith and a membership. It is often the case that anyone wishing to join has to sign a statement agreeing with the beliefs of the organization. There is no membership roll for either of the Berean Trusts. Anyone can join the mailing list to receive *The Berean Expositor* and we hope that they will search the Scriptures to see if the published expositions are in agreement with *all* that the Bible teaches on the particular subjects under discussion.

But some will ask, have the Berean Trusts no statement of faith? After all a creed is of value, allowing people to see, at a glance, the *main* doctrines of an organization. It enables others to identify the organization's priorities. Both The Berean Forward Movement Trust and The Berean Publishing Trust are registered charities which have to report to the Charities Commission. As such each has to have a Trust Deed and embodied in each deed are the following four basic tenets of faith:--

- (1) The full inspiration of the Scriptures (II Tim. iii. 16).
- (2) The Right Division of the Scriptures (II Tim. ii. 15).
- (3) The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. xvi. 16; John vi. 69; xx. 28).
- (4) The all sufficiency of His One Sacrifice (Acts iv. 12; Heb. x. 14).

From these it will be seen that the Berean Trusts are evangelical (teaching that salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's offering for sin on Calvary's cross), and fundamental (teaching that the Bible is God's inspired Word). These are the basics of the Trusts.

Now some claim that one purpose of a statement of faith and membership is to ensure that the original aims and doctrines of the organization are not altered or ignored. In this way, they claim, truth is preserved. Would to God that this was true! Without being critical one has only to look at the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England and ask how many of its clergy and laity fully support all thirty-nine to realize that both a statement of faith and a membership can be powerless. In fact the longer the statement the sooner, and more likely, the organization will run into difficulties in maintaining it. Thus the basic tenets of faith of the Berean Trusts were kept to a minimum, yet none are imposed upon the readership or supporters. If this is the case, how are the tenets upheld? The Trust deeds of both Berean Trusts state:

“The statutory power of appointing new Trustees shall be applicable to the Trust *provided* that no person shall be eligible to be appointed a Trustee unless he shall satisfy the persons in whom the statutory power is vested that he is a person whose beliefs and practice conform to the said basis tenets.”

“The Trustees shall have power to appoint a principal or minister councils and committees to assist in their work *provided* that every principal or minister and every member of any council or committee so appointed shall satisfy the Trustees that he is a person whose beliefs and practice conform to the said basic tenets.”

“The Trustees shall also have power to appoint a treasurer and if thought fit a secretary *provided* any treasuree or secretary so appointed shall satisfy the Trustees that he is a person whose beliefs and practice conform to the said basic tenets.”

The safeguard of the original aims and doctrine rests first and foremost within the Trust Deeds themselves and with the Trustees, who would be in breach of the law if they failed to act in accordance with the Deeds. Thus any new Trustee must not only *state* that he believes and accepts the four basic tenets but his life must also conform to them. In practice he must reflect them. The same is true of anyone appointed as a principal or a minister, or of anyone appointed as a treasurer or secretary, or of anyone asked to serve on any council or committee. In this way the original aims and doctrines are preserved and the Berean Trusts have never wavered in their teaching of salvation by grace through faith, the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures and the right division of the Scriptures.

For further reading on this subject we recommend
The History and Aims of the Berean Trust by Michael Penny.

No.3. What Must I do to be Saved? pp. 161, 162

To be saved! Saved from what? What does it mean, to be saved? When the Scriptures use this expression it is referring to being saved from the consequences of sin, that is separation from God through death.

What must I do to be saved, saved from sin and separation? That surely must be *the* most important issue confronting every individual and yet so many refuse to face it. Some think that a person's life should consist in an abundance of material possessions. They are concerned about obtaining plenty of good things and saving money for the future so that they can take life easy and eat, drink and be merry. But what if God says to them at this very moment, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you" (Luke xii. 16-21). Their material possessions or their position in a secular society will be of no value after death. They go no way towards gaining eternal life.

If possessions and position do not secure life after death, can a person obtain eternal security through self-sacrifice and the good works performed in this life? Paul was a Pharisee who had kept the law and from that point of view he was faultless. He had suffered the loss of everything. Surely here was a man who had worked his way into heaven—but no! He wanted to be found in Christ, *not* having a righteousness of his own, one that comes from obeying the law, but wanting that righteousness which comes from God (Phil. iii. 5-9).

Every human being has a righteousness of his own, for he does show some good works and tries to keep most of the law most of the time. If we compare ourselves with others we may assess ourselves better than our neighbours, better than our workmates, better than our brothers and sisters. But when we compare ourselves with God, His eternal existence and His righteousness, then man's life is but a breadth and man's glory is as insignificant as the flower of grass. If we are to be saved then we need to be linked with God's immortality and His righteousness, but how can man achieve this? How can he get immortality and righteousness? He gets them by accepting them from God.

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"
(Rom. vi. 23).

All a person needs to receive this gift is faith; faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He needs to believe that:

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Cor. xv. 3, 4).

Do you believe that Christ died for *your* sins? Do you believe that He received the punishment for *your* sins? If you do, you are saved. You have the gift of eternal life—and more. All believers can say, with Paul, that we do not have a righteousness of our own,

“but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” (Phil. iii. 9).

We have this because “God made Him Who had no sin to be sin for us, *so that* in him we might become the righteousness of God” (II Cor. v. 21). Notice the ‘so that’. This is how we get eternal life and righteousness. God made the Lord Jesus Christ a sin offering for you and for me and if we believe it, God will credit us with His righteousness. A person who has faith in Christ’s offering for sin is credited with righteousness by *God!* This must be one of the most amazing gifts of all time; truly amazing grace. Our good works have a place *after* salvation, but not before. The Lord Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for sin is *all* sufficient. Nothing can be added to it. No amount of good works will do in its place. No rites or ceremonies can be a substitute and “salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts iv. 12).

So human works, human merit, human achievement play no part in salvation. In fact it is the very opposite for the first step is the admission of personal inabilities and inadequacies. It is recognizing that no matter how hard we try and no matter how much we improve our lives, we will never be completely righteous. Even if we gain some measure of control over our words and works, our thoughts still let us down. The first step recognizes that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii. 23). So what must I do to be saved from the consequences of sin? “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts xvi. 31). The all sufficiency of His one sacrifice for sin is one of the four basic tenets of the Berean Trusts and is arguably the most important one for it deals with questions concerning life and death, sin and salvation.