



THESSALONIANS

◆ Wednesday February 25, 2009

A Study of Paul's Letters to a New and Growing Church with a Hopeful Future

Spring Semester Bible Study
2nd and 4th Wednesdays

A Review of 1 Thessalonians 1

v. 2-3 What are the three marks of a genuine Christian that Paul lists here?

- A) FAITH
- B) LOVE
- C) HOPE

see 1 Corinthians 13:13; Colossians 1:4,5;
1 Thess. 5:8

What did faith cause them to do?
What does love motivate them to do?
What does hope make them patient for?

—————→ v. 9-10
—————→ *Turn to God and away from idols*
—————→ *Serve the Living and True God*
—————→ *The Return of Christ*

Salvation produces fruit!

v. 4-9 What are the evidences that convince Paul that they are elected by God for salvation?

- A) They **responded to the Gospel** and received it with **deep conviction** (v.4-5)
- B) They **chose to follow and imitate** their spiritual leaders (v.6)
- C) They were **willing to suffer** for their faith (v.6)
- D) They **set an example and encouraged** other churches (v.7)
- E) They **repented** from idolatry and committed themselves to **service** (v.9)

v. 10 What were they waiting for? **The Second Coming**

What will He deliver them from? **The Wrath of God that is to come.** *Cf. 1 Thess. 5:9*

Three aspects to Wrath:
1) Present day wrath on unbelievers sin (Rom. 1:18-32)
2) The future Tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 16)
3) The Punishment of Hell (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11-15)

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OPENING QUESTION – Why is God full of wrath? How is this compatible with love?

“Failure to hate evil implies a deficiency in love...a lack of wrath against wickedness is a lack of caring which is a lack of love.” (p. 160)

“It is in the cross above all that God makes his holiness and his love known simultaneously.” (p.162)

“Likewise, God’s love and his justice are united in his essential nature.” (p.163)

*Quotes from Tony Lane, “The Wrath of God as an Aspect of the Love of God,” in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God*, Edited by Kevin Vanhoozer. (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2001), 138-167.

1 Thessalonians 2

Context

1) The persecution of Paul by the Jews

^{AC 17:5} But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city...¹³ When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up.

2) There were rumors and concerns circulating about Paul's integrity and questions were raised as to why he had not returned to the church.

This will lead Paul to write about the character (integrity) of his ministry and the manner in which they approached them (v. 1-12); as well as the response they received from them even in the midst of great persecution (v. 13-16). (Green, Letters to the Thessalonians, 111.)

Let us acknowledge a few things:

- 1) The attacks on Paul were fierce.
- 2) There were a lot of religious frauds in Paul's day (especially with all the differing religions)
- 3) It is often uncomfortable, but sometimes necessary to defend yourself from false accusations.
- 4) Paul was always more concerned to defend his message (the Gospel) than himself.
- 5) In defending himself, Paul sets the standards for how we are to minister and deal with others.

So let us look at Paul's **manner, message, motives, and methods**.

v.1-2 **PAUL'S MANNER**

- Paul ministered among them with:

- 1) Genuine results – “not a failure” (cf. Ch. 1:4)
- 2) even though they had suffered much and had been mistreated
- 3) Boldness amidst opposition
- 4) The Gospel truth being their primary message
- 5) The help of God

Despite opposition, Christians should speak the truth confidently, boldly, assertively, knowing that with the help of God, the results that God desires will come to fruition.

v.3a-b **PAUL'S MESSAGE AND MOTIVES**

- What is the *appeal*? (see 2 Cor. 5:20) -- The appeal to **believe the Gospel and be reconciled to God**

His preaching was: A) based on **truth** – “does not spring from error”
B) out of a **pure life** – no “impure motives” (cf. Phil. 1:14-19)

Questions: Is the life that we live consistent with the truth that we believe and speak?
Are we *non-hypocritical*, with *honest motives*, and *absolute integrity*?

A Christian bases his/her life on the truth of God and commits to living it with honest and integrity.

v.3c-6 **PAUL'S METHODS**

A) "Above Reproach" -- No reason to be deceitful – not "trying to trick you"

Question: According to Paul then, can the "end" justify the "means?"

Are there some ministry methods that are just inappropriate even if they bring "results?"

A believer is one who lives and speaks the truth with no hidden agenda, or questionable actions/methods.

"Paul was the opposite of a false teacher: his message was the truth; his life was pure; and his ministry was honest, without hypocrisy or deception." (MacArthur Commentary, 38.)

B) "Approved by God" - not self-appointed but entrusted with the Gospel by God himself.

He was therefore called by God and entrusted with the authority to spread the Gospel.

C) "Not designed to please or flatter people"

What God thinks is always more important than pleasing people.

A Christian does not exploit or manipulate by saying what people want to hear.

D) "Not designed for personal profit or gain" - *"no masks to cover up greed."* (v.5)

E) "Not looking for personal glory or praise"

Questions: In what areas are we tempted to please or flatter people for the sake of the approval of others or to advance ourselves?

Have we seen "spiritual leaders" in our world who have used flattery to exploit others for money, sexual favors, personal gain or praise?

F) "Never asserting their rights or abused their authority" as Apostles



Can anyone guess what this is and what "ministry" it yields from?

From a TIME magazine article (May 6, 1991)

The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power

Monday, May. 06, 1991 By RICHARD BEHAR

"The Church of _____, started by science-fiction writer _____ to "clear" people of unhappiness, portrays itself as a religion. In reality the church is a hugely profitable global racket that survives by intimidating members and critics in a Mafia-like manner."

THE WAY PAUL CONDUCTED RELATIONSHIPS (The Character of His Ministry)

v. 7-9 **With the Heart of a Mother**

- A) Gentleness
- B) Affectionate Care
- C) Loving
- D) Sharing -- not only the Gospel but their very lives -- “an open heart”
- E) Unselfish Labor

v.10-12 **With the Heart of a Father**

- A) An Example and Model of Godliness
 - 1) Holy
 - 2) Righteous
 - 3) Blameless
- B) A Teacher and Motivator
 - 1) Encouraging
 - 2) Comforting
 - 3) Urging

What is the goal of all this? (v.12b)

Paul was teaching them “how to walk.” Try to think of a spiritual leader who has “taught you how to walk.” Did they follow these traits in how they conducted relationships?

v.13-16

Who is Paul proud of and happy for?
Who is Paul sad for?

What is the difference between the Word of God and the word of men?

Where is the Word of God at work?

What is the evidence of this in the lives of the Thessalonians? (v. 14, and *cf.* v.6)

“We must never treat the Bible as any other book, for the Bible is of different origin, character, content, and cost.”
- Warren Wiersbe

What does Paul accuse the non-believing Jews of?

- 1) Murdering Christ and the prophets
- 2) Driving out the Apostles
- 3) Displeasing God
- 4) Hostility towards all future believers by their efforts to hinder the Gospel

“Heap up their sins to the limit” – Gen. 15:16; Matt. 23:32

“The wrath of God has come” – AD 49 – the Jews expelled from Rome, massacred in temple