

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 23RD - 24TH, 2021 // BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS

MOTIVES IN PREACHING (1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-6)

Paul began his letter encouraging the Thessalonian believers for their faithfulness (1:2-10), and now he'll spend some time clearing some things up about his own ministry.

- Paul had many enemies in Thessalonica who had driven he and Silas out of town.
- It seems like they were then discrediting him and his ministry and saying that he left town quickly because he was a self-serving coward.

Paul wants them to know that his coming to Thessalonica wasn't "in vain", it wasn't empty or hollow: he hadn't come in like a salesman or a marketer (vs. 1).

- Rather, he came understanding that preaching the gospel in new places often came at a great cost.
- In fact, when he came to Thessalonica, he had just come from Philippi where he'd been beaten and jailed (Acts 16).

The wounds on his back were still fresh from his Roman flogging in Philippi even as he had, "boldness in God to declare to you the gospel of God" (vs. 2).

- This was a boldness even in the, "midst of much conflict"- Paul knew that preaching this gospel message would likely get him in trouble.
- Serving God and others in ministry always involves some level of suffering.

Paul & Silas's appeal to them to receive Christ, didn't spring from, "error" (vs. 3)- the only reason someone would risk their life and offer their body up to be beaten and imprisoned for a message is if it's true.

- His appeal didn't spring from, "impurity or any attempt to deceive"- spirituality in the Roman world was big business, and much of what was "preached" was motivated by greed and gain.

The message Paul preached was not to, "please man, but to please God" (vs. 4).

- His message didn't involve, "flattery", where he simply told the people what they wanted to hear in order to gain something from them (vs. 5a).
- Nor was it a, "pretext for greed"- there were ministers and spiritual guides then and now who are in it simply for money (vs. 5b).
- But that wasn't Paul and Silas.

Even though Paul could've come in and sought "glory for himself" and made "demands" because he was an apostle of Jesus, that's not what he did (vs. 6).

- Paul came there to give, not to take. His message, his motives, and his ministry were all pure.
- This is a call for us to check ourselves as we serve and minister to others. "What are my motives?"
- This is also a call for us to be discerning in who we follow as spiritual leaders.

NURTURING CARE (1 THESSALONIANS 2:7-12)

Rather than coming to Thessalonica to minister out of self-interest and make demands of the people there, Paul came in looking to give, nourish, and care for the people there (vs. 7).

- He writes that he came in, "like a nursing mother taking care of her own children".
- When a new mom nurses her baby, she is quite literally imparting her own life into that child - she eats food, transforms it to milk, and feeds that child.

We all start our physical life as babies, and we all start our spiritual life in Christ the same way.

- Babies need a lot of care and they're very dependent on their parents.
- In the same way, a spiritual infant needs a spiritual parent to take spiritual truths, transform them into milk, and feed them so they can grow.
- More than that, they need to be loved and cared for with gentleness.

Spiritual babies don't just need a spiritual parent to feed them through sharing the gospel with them, they need a spiritual parent to love them through sharing their lives with them (vs. 8).

- Spiritual habits of things like Bible-reading, prayer, church participation, and sharing the gospel all are developed mostly through modeling ("caught, not taught").
- Children also have a lot of questions and can get confused about things easily.

While Paul was in Thessalonica, he voluntarily gave up his right to be supported financially by those he ministered to (1 Cor. 9:14) and worked, "night and day to not be a burden to them".

- Paul was a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18), and so often he would rely on that trade to support himself as a missionary.
- Spiritual maturity is marked by being willing to give up your rights in order to serve.

Paul wasn't just a caring, tender, nurturing spiritual mom in the lives of these believers - he was also like a, "father with his children" (vs. 11).

- Like a father, he "exhorted, encouraged, and charged them to walk in a manner worthy of God" (vs. 12).
- This was supported by Paul's own walk before the Lord, which was, "holy, righteous, and blameless in conduct" (vs. 10).

Dads must live as good examples to their children, and dads sometimes have to show tough love in, "charging" their children to behave rightly.

- Spiritual fathers must first live as examples of holiness, and then must be diligent to, "exhort, encourage, and charge" others to walk the same way, sometimes with tough love.
- Effective parenting always is dependent upon selflessness.

THE WORD OF GOD (1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-16)

Paul is so grateful that these believers in Thessalonica had the right spiritual attitudes towards the Gospel (vs. 13).

- When they heard the Gospel message, they received it not as a, "word of men", but rather what it really is - "the word of God".
- The way we treat the message of the Gospel and God's Word (the Bible) shows how we regard Jesus.

Indifference towards the Gospel message reveals an indifference towards Christ.

- Negligence in reading, studying, and meditating on God's Word reveals a heart that isn't captivated by who Jesus is.
- How do we change our indifferent and negligent approaches towards God's Word?
- We begin to apply it and see it, "at work in us as believers".

Because the Thessalonians had the right attitude about God's Word, it enabled them to live for Christ and endure suffering (vs. 14).

- Not only were these believers imitators of the Lord and of Paul (1 Thess. 1:6), but they also became imitators of the Jewish believers in Judea who also were persecuted for their faith.
- The Jewish believers in Judea were persecuted by fellow Jews.

Even though the persecution in Thessalonica was probably mostly from Gentiles, it was the Jewish religious system that was the biggest persecutor of the early church (vs. 15-16).

- The thing that angered the religious Jews so much about the Christian message was that it taught that, "Gentiles could be saved"- religious people hate certain groups and see them as subhuman.
- God's wrath is directed towards this attitude (vs. 16).

OUR GLORY & JOY (1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-20)

Paul knew that the Thessalonians appreciated the care he gave them when he planted their church, but they probably wondered why he didn't come back and spend time with them in person (vs. 17).

- It wasn't that Paul didn't want to come to them, it was that Satan hindered Paul from coming to visit many times (vs. 18).
- Satan can set up hinderances and roadblocks when he sees God at work.

Paul was committed to fighting in any way he could against any roadblocks the enemy tried to set up.

- So, if he couldn't be there in person, his letter would go for him to teach and encourage them in his absence.
- God took what the enemy meant for evil and turned it for good! Now we have this letter to read and be encouraged by!

The fruit and success of Paul's ministry - his "crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming"- was them (vs.19).

- They were his, "glory and joy" (vs. 20).
- When we stand before the Lord and present to Him the fruit of our lives and our ministry of service to Him, what is it that won't matter?
- Church buildings, programs, titles, bank accounts, likes on social media, arguments that we won, or any other superficial thing won't matter.

What we will present before the Lord are the works we've done investing in the relationships that He placed in our lives.

- We will present before Him either our obedience or disobedience to His command to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20), to love the least of these (Matt. 25:40), and to multiply what we've been given for His glory and for the service of others (Matt. 25:14-30).

At the end of it all, people matter to the Lord more than buildings, programs, or budgets.

- So, if you belong to the Lord and He's transformed your heart from the inside out - do people matter to you?
- If so, what are you doing to invest in the relationships that God has placed in your life?
- How that's going in your marriage? In your parenting? In your church? In your workplace?

The call to **follow Jesus is the call to love people genuinely** by serving them with pure motives and a **pure message (the gospel)**, nurturing them with gentleness, and **encouraging them with selflessness.**

- **Why is this so hard?**
- **Because people can be selfish, stupid, and sick!**

WHY ARE PEOPLE SO SELFISH?

- Satan is great at **selling games** that are fun to play but are guaranteed to **make people lose.**
- People have **placed their hope** in things that feel good but can **never satisfy and are trapped in believing that self-centeredness** is the answer to their brokenness.

- The **only answer to selfishness** is to be truly loved by **someone who is selfless.**

WHY ARE PEOPLE SO STUPID?

- Any knowledge that **makes a person feel connected to themselves** and others is **generally accepted by them to be truth.**
- We have to **stop seeing people for what's just on the surface** - our deepest longing is to be valued, fully known and **fully chosen, to belong.**
- The **answer for stupidity** is for people to be shown truth in the life of someone who loves them **regardless of whether or not they receive it.**

WHY ARE PEOPLE SO SICK?

- All people are bad. **You are one sinful or careless decision away from being exactly where that person you're judging sits.**
- **To love bad people, you have to connect with them** to understand why they do what they do.
- The **answer for the sickness of humanity** is for them to experience **the undeserved mercy, compassion, and grace of Jesus** that's expressed through acts of love.

If you want the heart of God for people, you have to be willing to stop seeing people as selfish, stupid, and sick (2 Cor. 5:16, "we regard no one according to the flesh").

- **Instead, you must see them as lost, confused, and broken.**
- **You can never be who God wants you to be** so long as **your heart towards people is hardened. May God give us His heart** so we can care for others well.