
a ***Grace Notes*** course

1 Thessalonians

an expositional study
by Dr. Grant Richison

Lesson 3

1 Thessalonians 2

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1 Thessalonians 2:1

"For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain"

Evidently, Judaizers outside the church of Thessalonica leveled charges against the legitimacy of Paul and his gospel team. They tried to discredit them. They said that they were in ministry for personal profit. Paul reminds Thessalonians that the gospel team came to them with the integrity one year previously (verses 1-12). In the first six verses, He makes his motives clear.

The gospel team managed ministry as stewards of God's will (verses 1-6). In this chapter, we find a great model for ministry, an ideal minister of the gospel.

For you yourselves know, brethren,

The word "you" is emphatic in the Greek. The Thessalonians knew personally how Paul's team came into Thessalonica with the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2:1, 2, 5, 11; 4:2). The word "know" occurs repeatedly throughout this chapter. The Thessalonians knew this gospel team intimately.

that our coming to you

The Thessalonian Christians knew of the "coming" of the gospel team. When the gospel team moved into Thessalonica, no one knew anything of the gospel. They never heard the life-transforming gospel message. Paul and his team went where the fish were. They took the initiative in evangelism.

Principle

If we are going to advance the cause of Christ, we must go where the fish are.

Application

It is fruitless to fish in your own bathtub. We have to go to the fish; they do not come to us. As a rule, few fish come to church; few non-Christians move outside their element. God expects us to take the gospel wherever He places us, in life, school, work or neighborhood.

We must take the initiative and make the contact.

Many times our contacts with non-believers are unproductive. We go away and they say, "What a nice person." We receive their personal praise, but it is without eternal benefit. If they reject Christ, they go into a Christ-less eternity. Contact with the lost can only be effective if we declare the gospel to them.

Many Christians never share their faith. Their Christian community is simply a country club for them. They love to fellowship with believers, but do not like to connect to non-believers, because that is too uncomfortable for them. They find comfort in the presence of Christians.

What do you do with your contacts with unbelievers? Do you express the gospel with your integrity and personality? Do it with your vocabulary and your style? That is many times more effective than taking them to an evangelistic meeting. God entrusts us with the gospel. We need to bring our conversations around to the fact that Christ died for our sins. That is a wonderful product to sell. Are you concerned about the message?

We are witnesses for Christ whether we know it or not, for better or for worse.

was not in vain

The word "vain" means empty or without purpose. The ministry at Thessalonica was not empty or without fruit. The gospel team's ministry came with power. The gospel did not move into Thessalonica through empty motives and methods. Ministry cannot be some empty, shallow, flesh generated thrust. The gospel team's ministry was short, abrupt, forceful, but fruitful. It was fruitful because the Thessalonians embraced the gospel.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

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The gospel's team had success in Thessalonica. People came to Christ and their lives changed dramatically. The gospel team did not come with speculations about philosophy. They came with the Word of God. Therefore, their ministry had lasting effects.

Principle

Personal integrity will prevent a vain ministry.

Application

Our personal integrity speaks to the character of our ministry. Our character authenticates the genuineness of our ministry. True effectiveness in ministry has integrity at its root. Godly character and conduct is the ultimate valid evidence of God's working and approval.

Christians minister for eternity. Therefore, their ministry is not in vain. The Devil will attempt to discourage them to the place where they will no longer be a force in ministry.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

1 Thessalonians 2:2

"But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict"

But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi,

The Thessalonians knew only too well the hassle the gospel team had endured just before they came to Thessalonica. The city officials at Philippi stripped and beat them with rods and cast them into the inner recesses of a dark, dank prison (Acts 16:22-23). They came to Thessalonica with sore feet, and backs to match.

Not only did they endure suffering, but the Philippian officials dished out punishment in a shameful way. They were "spitefully treated" at

Philippi. The Greek means that the Philippians abused them publicly. Their intent was to humiliate them and make them a public spectacle.

This was far more than teasing. They beat them publicly although they were Roman citizens. When the public authorities found out they were Roman citizens, they wanted the team to sneak out of town without a peep. The gospel team refused to go until the authorities came in person.

Principle

True ministry withstands the blast of criticism and persecution.

Application

Out of the crucible of Philippi came the pure gold of Thessalonica. The gospel team was clearly not in ministry for selfish purposes.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

The Devil tried to cut Paul's ministry off, but Paul did not stop communicating the gospel. His trials only became a platform for further ministry.

as you know, we were bold

The word "bold" means to speak freely, openly, fearlessly, express oneself freely. The Greeks used this word for speaking in a democratic assembly.

The gospel team had such confidence in God that they proclaimed the gospel without fear (Acts 4:13). The New Testament always uses this word in relation to proclaiming the gospel (Acts 9:27, 29; 13:46; 14:3). Fear is why most

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people do not share their faith. They fear ridicule and rejection. However, courage is necessary to move beyond the status quo. It takes courage to fly in the face of what people do not want to talk about. People are hypersensitive about certain subjects, and the gospel is one of them.

"...and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Philippians 1:14).

Paul was no coward. He never trimmed his sails to make the gospel more pleasing. The gospel by its very essence stings and smarts those who hear it. It offends people, because it strips them of their religious defenses. The gospel shows people for what they are. No one likes that.

No one likes to communicate that, but this is part of the gospel message. That is why most Christians, including preachers want to remain in the safe cloister of the church. Everyone likes to be liked. If we love the Lord, we must set forth the unvarnished facts of the gospel. That means we have to reveal human nature in its stark reality.

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word..." (Acts 4:29).

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:17-20).

Fainter hearts would have quailed before such outrageous indignities heaped on them. The gospel team was not only innocent, but they were also Roman citizens. Stripes, stocks and satanic malice brought no white flag from Paul or his team. Instead of giving up at Philippi, he pressed on to Thessalonica. Rather than giving up, he advanced the gospel further. Rather than caving into terror and persecutions, the pressure he faced made him bolder to advance the cause of Christ. Persecution did not paralyze him.

Principle

Suffering for the gospel sharpens our boldness, if all things are spiritually equal.

Application

No one can daunt people in ministry who have confidence in God. Nothing can drive them from telling about Christ and His gospel. They are far from the current consumer Christianity that seeks self-interest above all else. As the saying goes, "No pain, no gain."

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me" (Philippians 1:29-30).

Most of us concern ourselves with self-protection, but the successful Christian life is no rosy bed of ease. Do you declare the gospel in spite of opposition, or do you fold up and silently steal away?

in our God

We cannot expose ourselves to the life and ministry of Paul and fail to notice his great courage in the face of difficulty. Did he generate courage through operation bootstraps? Not at all. He got his courage from God. Paul's power was no natural boldness. He was like most of us – a great coward.

"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of

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human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2: 3-5).

"For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears" (2 Corinthians 7: 5).

The phrase "in our God" qualifies "we were bold." Boldness did not come from the gospel team; it came from God. The word "in" signifies that their God gave them the sphere of courage to press forward with the gospel.

Understanding something of His sovereignty and sustaining grace gives us the environment needed for aggressive evangelism.

They knew He providentially moves on the hearts of people. They did not move recklessly into Thessalonica. They operated under the umbrella of the five principles of 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

They also used wisdom in their evangelism thrusts. They met people on their approachable side. It is one thing to get opposition for communicating the gospel; it is another thing to create opposition of our own making.

"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:5-6).

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means

save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you" (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

"Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:32-33).

Paul obtained courage from his relationship with God. He was not unaffected by fear. In his natural person, he would not be as bold as he would if he moved in the confidence of God providentially working in his life.

Principle

Courage comes from God, not from self.

Application

People who trust the providence of God are much bolder in sharing their faith. The more we love and trust God in His sovereign care, the more boldness we have in our faith.

to speak to you the gospel of God

The gospel is not only "our gospel" (1 Thessalonians 1:5) but it is also the "the gospel of God." The sole author and authority of the gospel is God. In the face of the persecution the gospel team faced in Philippi, they moved into Thessalonica with a bold message. They did not say, "We had better pull back on our message unless it disturbs some people."

in much conflict

When the gospel team came to Thessalonica, they did so amid much conflict. The impact of the shameful situation at Philippi was still much on their minds. We get the English word "agony" from the Greek word for "conflict." This is an athletic term used for demanding physical exertion. Advancing the cause of Christ is not an easy task. It is a demanding mission. A halfway effort will make no significant difference in reaching the maximum number of people for Christ.

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Note the word "much." The gospel team communicated the gospel in "much agony." That speaks of their burden for getting the message out. Their consuming passion for those without Christ carried them through much personal suffering. Paul and his team were dead earnest. It is impossible to manufacture this kind of boldness.

Principle

Intensity is necessary for the serious advance of the gospel in the world.

Application

Are you dead earnest in your witness for Christ? Are you willing to take some "guff" in order to get the message to those without Christ?

"Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 1:28-2:3).

1 Thessalonians 2:3

"For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit"

In this verse, Paul denies three allegations against his team about their message, morals and manner of communication.

Fierce antagonism did not discourage Paul and his team. He was in the business of pleasing God, not people. God entrusted him with the gospel. Accordingly, certain questionable practices common among unsound religious

leaders found no place in his evangelistic labors.

It is amazing how much we can learn from negatives. Verse three begins a series of negatives that deal with the quality of ministry. For our exhortation

The word "for" indicates Paul's basis for boldness. When Paul and his team came to Thessalonica, they did not employ error, uncleanness or deceit.

did not come from error

First, Paul says that his gospel team's message was not "from error." The word "error" means wandering, roaming. This is error as opposed to deceit. Paul's gospel team did not wander from the path of truth. They were under no delusions or deceptions when it came to truth. Never did they cause someone to hold a wrong view of God or mislead them about God's Word.

"Error" has the idea of roaming off the right path in doctrine (James 5:20; 2 Peter 3:17; 1 John 4:6) or morals (Romans 1:27; 2 Peter 2:18; Jude 11). The Bible never divides doctrine and morals by a sharp line.

Concerning his message, Paul's exhortations to those without Christ did not spring from a creed of error. His appeals did not reveal the ranting of a deluded fanatic. He did not peddle private revelation. A plethora of people peddle their own viewpoints in the church today. Paul did not come with his own viewpoint; he came with the Word of God.

Paul's preaching was accurate. He set forth truth as it was rather than what he wanted it to be.

Principle

We must set forth truth as it is rather than the way we want it to be.

Application

We should not manipulate Scripture for the sake of elegance in preaching. We simply set forth truth as it is. Our preaching should be as accurate as the multiplication table.

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"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

We must never alter or water down the Word or the gospel. Inaccurately stating of God's Word will ruin its message.

or uncleanness,

The second negative of this verse states that Paul says that his gospel team did not come with "uncleanness" in morals. "Uncleanness" means impurity, dirt. Literally, "uncleanness" means refuse. It came to mean a state of moral impurity (Romans 1:24; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:3). The gospel team did not come to Thessalonica seeking fame or greed.

Concerning his morals, Paul demanded a holy conduct devoid of all uncleanness. This was in contrast to many of the religions of Paul's day, which not only permitted immorality but also prescribed it in their core rituals by worshipping with sex. Religions that cater to the natural and physical at the expense of divine holiness are always popular.

Principle

The life of the messenger must be consistent with the message.

Application

People who communicate God's Word must live lives consistent with the message they speak. This requires the filling of the Holy Spirit. We cannot live the supernatural Christian life in natural power.

"Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isaiah 52:11).

"For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

God will bless His Word even if a jackass preaches it. Yet, we can measure the impact of the Word of God upon any group of people by the spiritual caliber of the spokesman. Water flows through pipes. If the pipe is rusty, the water may flow but there will be discoloration and sediment in the water. The water may not flow freely. It will taste of the pipe. The Word of God will not taste right to those without Christ if the messenger is unclean.

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks" (Ephesians 5:1-4).

nor was it in deceit

The third negative in this verse is "deceit." "Deceit" originally meant bait for fish. We use guile when we fish by using bait that appears like food to the fish. It is not food but a decoy. "Deceit" came to mean cunning, treachery, and any cunning contrivance for deceiving or catching, such as the Trojan horse. It refers to any trick or stratagem, wiles, guile, craft, cunning, treachery.

The gospel team came to Thessalonica in a straightforward manner. No trickery was used in the preaching itself (2 Corinthians 4:2; 2:17; cf. John 1:47). Paul never used guile (2 Corinthians 12:16).

Secular literature used "deceit" for a huckster. They used this word for a tavern keeper of the ancient world who would water down the wine of an inebriated person. There are those who also water down the Word. They use guile and tricks with the message of Christ. These are spiritual hucksters.

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Paul did not peddle sexual license by encouraging people to indulge themselves in pleasure. Such doctrine attracted a big following in that day. Others promised prosperity. He did not appeal to their greed. Paul was above reproach in his methods. He never used the end to justify the means. God's approval was the ultimate test for the way Paul did ministry.

Principle

Authenticity in content and delivery are the essence of the gospel.

Application

Part and parcel of ministry is its environment of integrity. Those who minister should never do it for self-centered reasons. Both authentic content and delivery are at the heart of delivering the gospel message. We live it and state it straight. True ministry is the ability to communicate from truth and integrity (2 Corinthians 4:2).

"But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

When communicators of the gospel use guile, deceit and delusion, this is duplicity, two-facedness and hypocrisy. Non-Christians can see the phoniness of it all. They should see that we set forth truth in an unadulterated fashion.

1 Thessalonians 2:4

"But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts"

But as we have been approved by God

The word "approved" means to test with a view to approving, to assay. The Greeks used this term for testing metals to see if they meet the

standards. Paul uses the word for approving after distinguishing and discerning.

"...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ..." (Philippians 1:10).

Principle

God tests believers to approve their handling of the gospel.

Application

God tests us to see if He can trust us with the gospel. He scrutinizes what we do with the gospel to find out whether we are genuine. He uses people who are credible with the gospel. What a high honor for God to trust us with the gospel.

to be entrusted with the gospel,

"To be entrusted" is a banker's term for making a deposit. The intent of making a deposit is to make money; we invest capital for making money. God has made a deposit in believers and He expects compound interest. He expects dividends.

"Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

"But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter..." (Galatians 2: 7).

"...according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (1 Timothy 1: 11).

"O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babbling and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—..." (1 Timothy 6: 20).

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"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us" (2 Timothy 1:13-14).

"...but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior..." (Titus. 1: 3).

It is a wonderful thing to have God believe in us, to trust us with the gospel. To have Him place His confidence in us is a mark of honor.

Principle

God entrusts some people with the gospel message.

Application

How many people carried the gospel to you? They were faithful to their trust. You were the beneficiary of their faithfulness. Are you faithful in carrying the gospel to someone else? Are you bearing compound interest in winning people to God?

Some people are passionate about football. They will sit in minus-twenty-degree weather to watch a game. They almost die of exposure but they are there to root for their team. Many Christians are not passionate about the gospel at all. They would not go out of their way or bear any inconvenience to share the gospel.

"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship" (1 Corinthians 9: 16-17).

even so we speak, not as pleasing men,

Our purpose in speaking the gospel is to please God, not men. The gospel team never changed the message to accommodate the fancies of men. They never compromised or watered down the gospel.

A great issue in life is whom are we trying to please. Do we please people or God? Some of us accommodate men and others of us accommodate God. Paul's gospel team was not out to win a popularity contest in Thessalonica.

If we live our lives pleasing people, we have had it. If we give over any part of our lives to gain the approbation or attention of other Christians, we step out of the will of God.

"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

"Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God..." (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

Not pleasing mean does not mean that we deliberately antagonize people. The implication is not that we should go out of our way to offend people. There is enough offense in the gospel without us adding our own personal affront.

but God who tests our hearts

God constantly scrutinizes our hearts. He seeks to find whether the master motive of ministry is to please God.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Principle

God tests to approve those He entrusts with the gospel.

Application

We need to learn to witness as unto the Lord, not people. Some Christians witness for the primary purpose of impressing other

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Christians. This is a way to get attention from the Christian herd.

There are certain occupational hazards in preaching the gospel. One of these hazards is criticism. If you have a thin skin, you do not enter politics. If you have a thin skin, don't engage in ministry.

"...according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (1 Timothy 1:11).

1 Thessalonians 2:5

"For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness"

For neither at any time did we use flattering words,

The word flattering means fawning. Flattery praises as a means of gratifying someone's vanity. Under no occasion or point in time did the gospel team use manipulation to reach their ends.

"For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18).

"For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:17).

as you know,

The Thessalonians were eyewitnesses to the gospel team's ministry. They set forth the gospel without charade. They were not there to win a popularity contest. The church at Thessalonica could verify this.

Principle

Flattery is the sin of smooth words.

Application

Flattery operates under ulterior motives. Flattery misleads people by making them think

you believe in them more than you do. This is the sin of smooth words. Putting people off-guard by smooth words is lying.

To assume a false face for the purpose of taking advantage of other people is an offense against God. This base egoism seeks to turn everything to one's own advantage. This is a base ulterior motive. Feathering one's nest at the expense of others is covetousness.

Christian leaders must refuse to prostitute their gifts to achieve selfish ends. The insatiable desire to have more is no excuse for using people.

nor a cloak for covetousness—

A cloak is something alleged as the cause that is not the real cause. A cloak is both a pretext and pretense.

When the gospel team came to Thessalonica, they did not justify the gospel based on misleading suggestions. They did not pretend to be something they were not. Nor did they present themselves as ostensibly something they did not live up to. They did not put on appearances by operating under assumed pretexts. They did not butter up people or use crowd psychology. A "cloak" is a gimmick for enriching oneself.

"And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

Covetousness uses a cloak for its own ends. Covetousness is the desire to have what someone else has. The New Testament always uses this term in a bad sense (Luke 12:15; Romans 1:29; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; Colossians 3:52; Colossians 9:5; 2 Peter 2:3, 14). Fundamentally, covetousness is a desire for advantage.

Sometimes the New Testament renders "covetousness" extortion (2 Corinthians 9:5). This person is greedy for gain. Covetous people

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have insatiable desire and avarice. A person with a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions irrespective of need is a covetous person.

"And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses'" (Luke 12: 15).

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel" (Acts 20: 32-33).

The gospel team did not come with false pretense to flatter and manipulate their hearers to make money.

"By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber" (2 Peter. 2: 3).

God is witness

Paul calls upon God to witness the gospel team's motives (Romans 1:9; 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:23). God can detect human heart's secret coveting.

Principle

The desire to have more in spite of need violates a holy God.

Application

The antithesis of covetousness is contentment. A person with a contented heart is satisfied with her lot. She accepts the will of God for her life.

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5).

Covetousness is idolatry.

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

Any time Christians cross the threshold into desire for more and more irrespective of need, they enter idolatry. What they covet becomes their god. God is no longer their ultimate priority but something else takes His place.

People who join in the idolatry of covetousness also employ phony pretexts to take advantage of others. They use gimmicks as rationalizations for their idolatry.

1 Thessalonians 2:6

"Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ"

The three negatives in this verse all relate to the same idea: Christian workers seeking glory, credit and recognition by men.

Nor did we seek glory from men,

The word "glory" here carries the idea of honor, praise. The gospel team did not seek praise from the Thessalonians.

The gospel team was not in the business of seeking glory. Neither power lust nor personal approbation were the motives for their ministry.

"I do not receive honor [glory] from men. "But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (John 5:41-44).

The gospel team sought the glory that comes from God. They told the truth regardless of whether it was popular or not.

Principle

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True ministry seeks praise from God, not people.

Application

None of us should drive our ministry by praise. To use ministry as a platform for getting one's name in the lights or becoming a famous "evangelical," is to turn the focus of ministry to oneself rather than to serve God and others. Leaders who lust for power, position, praise or applause turn ministry into a carnal base for self-advancement.

either from you

The team did not come to Thessalonica to get the Thessalonians to gush and fawn all over their ministries. They did not look for recognition from others. Ministry can become an end in itself. We can seek credit, plaudits and adulation from people as our main end.

Leaders who do not care whether they receive the applause or compliments of men are independent and free to lead as God wills. They will receive their reward in heaven.

"And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh," says the LORD. 'But I will give your life to you as a prize in all places, wherever you go'" (Jeremiah 45: 5).

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Principle

Our central purpose is to live to glorify God, not self.

Application

Leadership that constantly looks to please people will never lead properly. If we live with a view to gaining the approbation of others and not God, we will live our lives in vain.

Seeking the glory of men is a very subtle temptation in leadership. Living to the glory of God is the central purpose of our existence. If

we swerve from that purpose, things will go haywire in our ministries.

"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth" (Psalm 115:1).

Most of us feel that it is our responsibility to establish a reputation. There is a great difference between reputation and character. Reputation is what people think we are and character is what we actually are. Why should we seek to establish our reputation when we all march under the same flag, the flag of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no place for competition among Christian leaders or Christian churches. We are all in the same army and we all have the same general, Jesus. We may not all have the same rank but we all march under the same flag. We are all in the service of General Jesus.

"Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other" (1 Corinthians 4:6).

or from others,

The desire to be well-known in order to gain prestige among people moves many Christian leaders today. "Give me top billing. I need my place in history." This is the kind of motivation that moves some politicians and athletes.

Some people will not cooperate if they are not the top banana. They value their reputation much higher than their integrity. They want people to think well of them. We love to have people have an exaggerated estimation of us. Somehow, we never sell ourselves short. We downgrade others and upgrade ourselves. The root of the whole thing is pride.

Principle

True ministry goes against our natural tendency to advance ourselves.

Application

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By nature, we like to be noticed. Many people in ministry seek this as their central motive for ministry. It is difficult to separate these things from our ministry so that we operate on pure motives. When we get to the place where we minister whether people notice us or not, we are at the place where we honor God.

We serve the Lord when people disrespect us, neglect us or even take advantage of us. We are not serving people in this case but the Lord. Some people constantly feel sorry for themselves because others do not take notice of them. The heart of this attitude is a ministry designed to get recognition from people.

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up..." (1 Corinthians 13:4).

We all want people to think well of us. We even want them to have an exaggerated estimation of us. We would rather they overestimate us than underestimate us. We always overestimate ourselves. We never sell ourselves short. We are quick to sell others short. If people do not accept our estimation of ourselves then we are quick to downgrade them. At it's root, this is unabashed pride.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5-7).

It is spiritual suicide to attempt to share in God's glory.

"I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images" (Isaiah 42:8).

Do you ascribe to God the credit that is due His name or do you assume that credit for yourself?

"Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2).

Glory is God's due. It is not our due.

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth" (Psalm 115:1).

Some people love the praise of people more than the praise of God. The gospel team lived to the praise of God (2:4). They rejoiced in delivering the gospel message itself.

"Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God " (John 12:42-43).

when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ

The gospel team could have pulled rank and used their authority as apostles. They never abused their official status. They knew that

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5-6).

Paul could have been pontifical, pompous. He could have thrown his weight around but he didn't.

The "demands" that they could have made were 1) to claim financial maintenance while they were in Thessalonica (2:9; 2 Corinthians 11:9; 12:16; 2 Thessalonians 3:8) and 2) to receive honor for the work they did there.

Principle

It is the better part of wisdom not to use our authority at times.

Application

There are two aspects of leadership authority in a congregation. Leaders have the onus not to operate in power-lust or seek approbation. The congregation must recognize the need for authority for the sake of the office.

"And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.

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Be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-14).

Wise leaders use the authority of leadership carefully. Wise response to leadership honors the office.

1 Thessalonians 2:7

"But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children"

With this verse the emphasis shifts from the gospel team to the response to their message at Thessalonica.

But

The word "but" here is a strong contrast in the original language. This answers the preceding negatives.

we were gentle among you,

The word "gentle" is the word infant in Greek. The reason the gospel team became as infants among the Thessalonians is that they were more concerned about the welfare of the young Christians in that place than they were in asserting their own rights. In their immaturity in Christ, the Thessalonians needed warm care rather than haughty commands. We can injure new Christians very easily.

The gospel team showed tenderness toward the Thessalonians. They accommodated themselves to the culture and the spiritual level of the people to whom they ministered. We reach people by approaching them from their approachable side.

"Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand" (Philippians 4:5).

Paul at times was not gentle. He was not gentle with the Galatians because there was a doctrinal issue among that group. There is no latitude, no flexibility and no compromise with essential doctrinal matters. When it came to people whose hearts were right, he was "gentle."

just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children

The "nursing mother" here is not simply a nurse but a nurse who cherishes her children. This nurse has the capacity and competency to nurse but she has innate mother instinct. It is one thing to be a professional but it is another thing to be a mother. The idea here is not simply that of a nurse but that of a nursing mother because this nurse "cherishes her own children." A nursing mother cares tenderly for her little one.

"As one whom his mother comforts, So I will comfort you; And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 66:13).

The word "cherishes" primarily means to heat, to soften by heat; then it came to mean to keep warm, like birds covering their young with their feathers (Deuteronomy 22:6). "Cherishes" metaphorically came to mean to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care (Ephesians 5:29 -- of Christ and the Church). In our passage, it is the care of the saints at Thessalonica by the gospel team. They were in the business of fostering the saints. The team lavished on this church the same tender affectionate care as a nursing mother does for her own children.

Principle

Leaders should care for younger Christians in tenderness.

Application

Those who care for new believers should care for them as a mother cares for her little children.

"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved" (2 Corinthians 12:15).

"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

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and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

1 Thessalonians 2:8

"So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us"

So, affectionately longing for you,

The words "affectionately longing" means to have a strong affection for, a yearning after. The gospel team had a yearning love for the Thessalonians.

"...and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you" (2 Corinthians 9:14).

we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God,

The team exercised great delight in imparting the gospel and their lives to the Thessalonians. The word "impart" means more than "to give." It means to give from oneself.

but also our own lives,

The exponents of the gospel shared themselves by moonlighting rather than asking the Thessalonians to support them. They spared nothing so that they could advance the gospel in Thessalonica.

"...men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15: 26).

The team gave their entire beings so that the church at Thessalonica would grow. Sacrifice is necessary if people are going to develop into what God wants them to become. A truly loving mother pours out her whole life for her children.

because you had become dear to us

The team enlarged their love toward the Thessalonians. Someone said, "I love ministry;

it is just people I can't stand!" True ministry has a deep love for people.

Principle

True leaders cares about the spiritual and eternal welfare of their followers.

Application

So many Christian leaders make merchandise of those who follow them today. This is a sad story of selfishness in ministry. This is a sad indictment against the nature of leadership in the church.

"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:19-21).

Rather than operating on greed, committed leaders should spare no pain for those they serve.

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

1 Thessalonians 2:9

"For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God"

Another aspect of the love we give the people to whom we minister is sacrificial hard work.

For you remember, brethren,

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians about a year after he left Thessalonica. Nobody knew better than he did how sacrificially the gospel team gave to the Thessalonians.

our labor and toil;

While in Thessalonica, Paul and his team physically labored at trades to meet their

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financial needs. They moonlighted during their stay with the Thessalonians. Paul was a tent-maker (Acts 18:3). He made tents in Corinth, Thessalonica and Ephesus. He worked long hours into the night, so that he could preach the gospel in the day.

The word "labor" carries the idea of painful effort, emphasizing toil in work -- hardship, distress. The gospel team put in a lot of hard work in bringing the gospel to the Thessalonians.

for laboring night and day,

Instead of being a financial burden to the church in Thessalonica, the gospel team relieved them of that burden by doing physical labor night and day. They burned the candle at both ends for the sake of giving them the gospel.

that we might not be a burden to any of you,

The word "burden" means to burden heavily.

"For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us" (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9).

The gospel team did not want to be a heavy financial burden to the Thessalonians. No one knew this better than the church at Thessalonica. This church saw how hard the team worked to advance the gospel among them. They did this so that they would not be a burden to them.

we preached to you the gospel of God.

The word "preached" carries the idea of making a public, formal or official announcement by a herald.

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And

how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!'" (Romans 10:14-15).

Principle

A willingness to sacrifice selfish ends will advance the gospel throughout the world.

Application

It seems that the idea of sacrificing self for the sake of the gospel is out of date among Christian leaders today. If the church is going to advance the gospel throughout the world in our day, it is going to take some sacrifice.

Would you consider serving Jesus Christ without getting something back for yourself?

"Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself" (2 Corinthians 11:7-9).

1 Thessalonians 2:10

"You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe..."

The manner in which the gospel team conducted their ministry at Thessalonica is another indication of their selfless service.

You are witnesses,

The Thessalonians were witnesses as to the conduct of the gospel team. They saw how Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy carried out their ministry.

and God also,

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Another witness to the way the gospel team conducted their ministry was God Himself. What Paul writes is no exaggeration or hyperbole for God knows even our motives.

how devoutly

The gospel moved into Thessalonica through people who had pure lives, free from evil conduct and yielded to God's will. They lived their lives in a manner pleasing God. Their life had the stamp of God on it. They lived in such a way that God's impact on them was evident both to the Thessalonians and to God. Their lives manifested more than mere mortal qualities. The team were clearly faithful to God.

"...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Principle

Our integrity must be toward God.

Application

The term "devoutly" is a reflects an orientation toward God. The men who came with the gospel set themselves apart for God. They were His exclusively. As a wife wants her husband for herself alone, so God wants us exclusively for Himself. A wife does not want to share her husband with other women, and God does not want to share our devotion with other gods.

The Lord Jesus demands our all. He is our Lord as well as our Savior. God weighs us by our devotion to Him not by what we do for Him.

"Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested" (Revelation 15:4).

and justly

The gospel team lived their lives in accordance with what is right. "Justly" carries the idea of real, genuine and true. They clearly understood

what God teaches in the Word and lived their lives accordingly.

"Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame" (1 Corinthians 15:34).

"...teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age..." (Titus 2:12).

Principle

Christians should live with integrity toward people.

Application

When we behave "justly," we behave with integrity toward people. Our testimony before people is consistent and carries integrity. We are as good as our word. If we promise something, we make good on that promise. This has to do with our reliability before people. Can people count on us? Do people have concerns that we may not carry through with our promise?

Over time, we establish a reputation for how we carry out our promises. People get our number: "He said that he would serve but he never comes around. Forget it, he is not true to his word." People discount our word after a while because we disappoint them. They don't believe us anymore, because we fail to come through with our promises. They do not trust us any longer, so they discount what we say.

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4: 12).

Can people count on you? Do people vouch for you? Can people trust you? Alternatively, do they turn off their hearing aid when you come around? God wants us to practice what we preach. We play fair and square; we do not cut corners.

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and blamelessly

The word "blamelessly" connotes the idea that no one can sustain a charge against us. No one can make any charges against us. We are people without blame.

No Thessalonian could blame the gospel team for some inconsistency in their lives. No one could censure their ministry in that city. They were without reproach in the eyes of men. They gave no cause of scandal.

"This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16).

Principle

We should live our lives so that no one can point an accusing finger against our testimony.

Application

It is a wonderful thing where we find believers to whom no one can point an accusing finger.

We must be careful here. Blamelessness is not sinlessness. Blamelessness has to do with accusations against us.

we behaved ourselves among you who believe

The word "behaved" literally means to become. The gospel team came on the scene in Thessalonian with the three points of integrity listed earlier in this verse.

Principle

Our lips and our lives must match if we are going to have impact on people.

Application

Obstetrics is one thing and pediatrics another. It is one thing to give people spiritual birth, but it is another to bring them up in the Lord.

Talk is cheap. How we live is more important than what we say. If our lives do not back up what we say, what we say has a hollow ring. If we talk, we must walk. What we say must match how we live.

Consistency in testimony brings credibility to ministry. This is especially true for Christians. If followers criticize their leaders, they undermine the office of the leader. If parents constantly criticize their church, their children will feel that the whole thing is a fraud. No wonder so many children drop out of church when they get old enough.

There is a big difference between learning how to live and how to make a living. Many people know how to make a living but they do not know how to live. Christians have a different viewpoint on life, because the Bible molds their outlook on life.

"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel..." (Philippians 1:27).

Does your belief match your behavior? Do people belittle the gospel because of your "testimony?" God expects our testimony to be strong among our Christian friends.

"For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you [Christians]" (2 Corinthians 1:12).

How do you rate among the Christian community? What is your testimony to Christians? Everyone has some estimation of how we live our Christian life. Knowingly or unknowingly, people rate us spiritually. They can tell if we genuinely share our faith or have a prayer life. They can tell the extent of our spirituality by how we react when we serve on boards or committees.

1 Thessalonians 2:11

"...as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children..."

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In describing how the gospel team nurtured the Thessalonians, Paul now changes his metaphor from a nursing mother to a father.

as you know how

For the fourth time, Paul appeals to the Thessalonians' knowledge of his ministry. The word "as" means just as. They knew exactly how Paul's team conducted their ministry. They were thoroughly familiar with this ministry. They had the "know-how" of genuine ministry.

we exhorted,

In the "father's" role as the gospel team's, they did three things: exhorted, comforted and charged.

The word "exhorted" literally means to call to one's side. "Exhorted" bears such ideas as comfort, summons, urge, implore and beseech. Thus, it carries both the ideas of comfort and rebuke.

"Exhorted" appeals to the will. The team challenged the Thessalonians to mature in Christ and to take steps of faith in their growth. To exhort is to call someone to courage.

Principle

Leaders must challenge the behaviour of their followers.

Application

There is a verbal element to leadership. Good leaders must be willing to challenge followers face-to-face.

Every father must explain how life operates. Each stage of life brings a new challenge. We expect different things in life at different times. Children need to understand the disciplines of life in relation to different challenges they face. A parent is critical or kind depending on the situation. One situation calls for comfort and another calls for a dressing down. One without the other lacks balance and will produce immature believers.

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

and comforted,

The word "comforted" is literally to speak soothingly to. The word "comforted" carried the idea of stimulating to the earnest discharge of duties. It comes from two Greek words: with and counsel or advice. Paul and his companions supported, comforted and cheered the Thessalonians in their duress with advice, with consolation, in order to move them beyond a victim mentality.

It is not enough to "exhort," leaders must also speak soothingly to their followers. They need counsel and advice, as well as challenge. Encouragement points to progress: "I see your growth. I am watching your steps of faith beyond your comfort zone. You are moving toward your potential."

Principle

Followers need encouragement and cheer.

Application

Every ministry faces problems, setbacks and trials. The Devil will do his best to discourage people in God's work. So believers need godly people to come to encourage them.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

and charged

The word "charged" signifies to bear witness, affirm, insist, attest, invoke, implore, summon as a witness. The team solemnly affirms certain principles. They adjure the Thessalonians to

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move beyond where they are at to a new place in their Christian walk.

The team made serious declarations and emphatic judgments, based on the Thessalonians knowledge of God's Word. The word "charged" means to insist.

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind..." (Ephesians 4:17)

Principle

Leaders must appeal to principles that transcend the viewpoint of the world.

Application

Very few of us are willing to adjure others. No one likes to point out faults in others. We prefer to be "nice" to others, even if it means that they remain in a state of carnality or immaturity.

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom..." (2 Timothy 4:1).

Are you willing to lay it on someone if it is necessary for his or her development? We are not talking about the priggish approach of a self-righteous, self-absorbed person who lords spirituality over others. The issue is to be willing to address some area where people need to move beyond where they are spiritually. Again, the issue here is not the leader's opinions or biases but the principles of God's Word.

every one of you,

The team "charged" each believer personally. They challenged them to move beyond the status quo. Although there were many believers in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), they played no favorites. The team dealt with them one-on-one.

as a father does his own children

If we are in the business of discipling someone, we are in the business of fathering. As a mother

nourishes, a father instructs and disciplines his children.

Principle

Good ministry conveys a range of fundamentals that build believers in the faith.

Application

Faithful leaders exhort, comfort and charge their followers. Leaders must lead both like a mother and a father. They must be both gentle and firm. Like good parents who cover the entire range of parenting issues, good leaders cover the entire range of discipleship issues.

A good father explains to his son what people are like. "People are not always what they appear. They try to get your attention by criticism or doing something outlandish. They may be jealous of you." Children need perspective on people. They need to understand why some people are self-righteous. They need to understand the operating biblical principles in order to deal with these things.

"I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you" (1 Corinthians 4: 14).

1 Thessalonians 2:12

"...that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory"

that you would walk worthy of God

The word "that" expresses purpose. The gospel team designed their ministry so that the people at Thessalonica "would walk worthy of God." Any other motive is not suitable to God's purpose. There is a great temptation to minister for our reputation. This is to live for our ego rather than for the highest purpose in life.

Paul appeals we would "walk worthy of God." The figure of "walk" suggests living as a mode of operation. The word "walk" comes from two words: around and walk. Walk around carries

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the idea of a course of life, a manner of life. We take God into everything we are and do.

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:2).

"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time" (Colossians 4:5).

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

If it is impossible to be worthy of God, why does Paul challenge us to "walk worthy of God?" We can never be worthy of God because God is absolute. The adverb "worthy" calls attention to the manner or mode of our walk. Our lives should reflect God's character.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called..." (Ephesians 4:1).

"Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God..." (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

To walk worthy of God is to walk in such a way that God would be proud of us.

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren..." (Hebrews 2:11).

Our only worth is the finished work of Christ. We can conduct our lives in a way that will glorify Him. We live our lives in a fashion that is consistent with His character. If our lives do not match the Savior's life to any measurable degree, we are not living worthy of our salvation. Our lives should be suitable to our salvation. That is only proper and appropriate for a child of the King.

"...that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Principle

The grand object of ministry is to walk worthy of God.

Application

The grand object of all teaching and discipling is that believers will walk worthy of God because He calls them into His kingdom and glory. This is a big order. Walking worthy of those who disciple us is one thing, but walking worthy of God is another.

"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel..." (Philippians 1:27).

We crawl before we walk. We toddle when we begin to walk. We walk before we run. The Christian walk is a process. It takes balance to walk physically. It takes appropriation of truth to experience to walk spiritually.

A mature believer lifts the bar, the standard of his purpose in life. He lives in such a way as to be a credit to Christ. He does not dishonor or disgrace the Son of God. We have all watched some children disgrace their parents. Nothing breaks the heart of a parent more than this. It breaks the heart of God to watch His children fall as well.

"...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work

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and increasing in the knowledge of God..." (Colossians 1:10).

The mature Christian constantly evaluates what in his life may reflect on God. He holds high the bloodstained banner of the cross.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

who calls you into His own kingdom and glory

Believers have a special calling, a calling "into His own kingdom and glory." We must temper and tune our lives to this calling. We adjust ourselves to God; He does not adapt Himself to us.

Note that this call is not written in past tense -- "who has called you." Rather it is expressed in present tense -- God is currently calling us to serve continually in His kingdom and glory. God calls you today to this service. His call never ceases.

Note the word "own." We could accept a call to many kingdoms. Those kingdoms would compete for our commitment and these false allegiances will lure us away from our ultimate purpose. Many philosophies will pander to our baser motives. God designed us for the highest calling.

The "kingdom" is that sphere of behavior where God is sovereign and supreme (1 Corinthians 6:9; 15:50; Galatians 5:21; 2 Timothy 4:1,18; 2 Thessalonians 1:5). "Glory" is our glorious future with our glorious God. Kingdom and glory go together. What we shall be is where we should be now.

Principle

What we shall be is where we should be now.

Application

God divinely summons us to an entirely new concept of living.

We are on earth to represent God and His work. We are His ambassadors. As His ambassadors, we need to be a credit to Christ.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:1-6).

"...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy..." (Colossians 1:10-11).

1 Thessalonians 2:13

"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"

In describing how the gospel came to Thessalonica, Paul now shifts from the perspective of his team to that of the Thessalonians (2:13-16). We now see their attitude toward the Word of God as the revelation of God. They embraced the Bible as God's voice to them and applied it to their lives.

The Thessalonians' attitude to God's Word made them one of the most outstanding churches in the first century. They faced persecution and trial with a vision that carried them beyond their problems.

This verse is a Bible comment about itself.

For this reason

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The gospel team could give thanks because the Thessalonians received the Word as God's revelation. How people receive the Bible affects how they live the Christian life.

we also thank God without ceasing,

The word "also" may indicate that Paul's team thanked God as well as the Thessalonians for the way the gospel came to Thessalonica.

Paul's prayers of thanksgiving to God constantly appear for the Thessalonians. Clearly, one of Paul's major activities was the exercise of prayer and especially in the category of thanksgiving.

"...remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father..." (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

"...pray without ceasing..." (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers I make mention of you always in my prayers..." (Romans 1:9).

"I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day..." (2 Timothy 1:3).

Principle

Constant prayer is a central to successful ministry.

Application

Some of us pray some of the time. People with dynamic ministries pray "without ceasing" for the people to whom they minister.

because when you received the word of God

The word "because" expresses the reason for the thanksgiving – the nature of the way they received the Bible as God's Word.

The Holy Spirit uses two words for the way the Thessalonians embraced the Bible: "received" and "welcomed." The word "received" comes from two words: from beside and to take or receive. The idea is to take to oneself or to take something from someone else. This is systematic learning of God's Word.

The New Testament uses this term especially for receiving formal instruction in the Word of God (1 Corinthians 11:23; 15:1, 3; Galatians 1:9, 12 [twice], Colossians 2:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6). This first word stresses the act of prescribed listening to God's Word as a student from a teacher.

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12).

"Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God..." (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

Principle

Formal instruction comes before appropriation of truth to experience.

Application

The believer must understand the truth of God's Word and value its content. If we do not first understand the Word, we will not be able to form principles for life. If we do not form principles for life, we will not be able to apply them to our experience.

"I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

"But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every

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word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Peter 2:1).

The pastor/teacher gift is the primary means whereby people formally learn God's Word.

which you heard from us,

This phrase reads literally "the word of hearing, the one from God." The word that the Thessalonians heard from Paul's team was God speaking to them through His Word. The emphasis is upon the message as being God's Word and not man's.

The word "heard" carries the idea of the thing heard, a message or teaching (Mark 7:4; John 1:11; 14:3; 1 Corinthians 11:23; 15:1, 3; Galatians 1:9, 12; Philippians 4:9; Colossians 2:6; 4:17). The idea is that when we hear, we believe what we hear and respond to it based on what we heard.

"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (Acts 28:28).

"For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (Hebrews 4:2).

"...and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Titus 4:4).

Principle

The believer with a heart for God listens to the Bible as God's Word in order to learn principles for life.

Application

The phrase "let him hear" occurs to each of the churches in Revelation. Jesus repeatedly appeals for us to have a heart for His Word.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7).

If we have an "ear" for God's Word, we will hear what is important for our lives.

"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:21-25).

you welcomed it

The second word for the way the Thessalonians embraced the Bible is the word "welcomed." The first word "received" carries the idea of openness to listen. The word "welcomed" is an advance on formally listening to God's Word. "Received" emphasizes the understanding while "welcomed" emphasizes the appropriation of that understanding to experience.

The word "welcomed" signifies the idea of accepting by deliberate and ready action the exposition of the Word of God. This is a mode of acceptance (2 Corinthians 8:17; 11:4).

There is a distinction between "received" and "welcomed." "Received" suggests self-prompting whereas "welcomed" indicates a welcoming or an appropriating reception. "Received" alludes to the ear whereas

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"welcomed" alludes to appropriation by heart (2 Thessalonians 2:10; James 1:21). We welcome the truth when we love it.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God..." (Ephesians 6:17).

Other passages indicate favorable reception of testimony and teaching (Luke 8:13; John 12:38; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; Romans 10:16, 17; Galatians 3:2, 5; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 8:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6). People with positive volition readily receive the Word of God and regard it as true (Luke 8:13; Acts 8:14; 2 Corinthians 11:4).

Principle

It is not enough to appreciate the teaching of God's Word; we must apply it in our experience to make it fully effective in our lives.

Application

There is more to the Christian life than just hearing the Bible's teaching. Many people hear the Bible weekly but it doesn't do them any good.

"For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (Hebrews 4:2).

Positive reception to the Word of God by the people of God makes the Bible effective in our lives. If we stop at appreciating God's Word without applying God's Word, we will not fully comprehend God's plan for our Christian lives. We must both "receive" and "welcome" God's Word. We welcome God's Word when we apply it to our experience.

"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 17:11).

"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was" (James 1: 21-24).

When we make the Word the controlling influence of our lives, then we know we have appropriated God's Word to experience.

not as the word of men,

The Thessalonians did not receive the Word of God as the word of men. They viewed the Bible as a revelation from God. The mere dead words of men are frail and fickle. Anything manmade is imperfect. There is always room for improvement. On the other hand, God's Word is powerful and enables us to face any difficulty in life.

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12).

God uses men to communicate His Word, but it is the Holy Spirit who guides what they write. The Bible is the only sacred book on earth inspired by God.

"...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Principle

The best way to discern truth from error is by measuring any teaching against the Bible.

Application

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Many phony religionists today fake God's voice. They claim their own fraudulent ideas are the Word of God. Take Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon faith for example. He said that an angel by the name of Moroni revealed God's mind to him through tablets he found buried in the ground. It is interesting that Moroni quotes the King James Version, which translation occurred long after the golden tablets were supposedly buried.

The only way we can measure whether someone teaches the truth is to measure that teaching against the Bible, the revealed Word of God. God never contradicts Himself. If it is contrary to the Bible, then it is not of God.

We cannot take the Bible as the word of Moses, John or Paul. We must take it as God's Word.

but as it is in truth, the word of God,

The word "but" is a word of strong contrast. The Bible is God's Word, not man's word. It is "in truth, the word of God." God's Word is true, true to facts, true to what actually is.

The Thessalonians clearly identified the message of the gospel team as the Word of God. Truth does not lean on the authority of men but on the authority of God. We must receive and regard the Word as divine revelation.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3: 16-17).

Principle

Christians who take the Bible as God's living Word and apply its truth to their life will experience dramatic growth.

Application

Christians cannot live the Christian life as it ought to be lived without an understanding of the Word of God as God's message to them. This perspective paves the way for applying the

principles of God's Word to their own experience.

If we have no Bible, all that remains is the mere dead words of men. Since man is finite, his ideas are finite. They continually shift with the winds of change and trends. It all ends with one opinion against another opinion. God's Word is eternal and His principles remain eternally true. That's why we must study the Bible seriously.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Christians who have a high view of Scripture and believe that the Bible can change their life, will grow powerfully in the Christian life.

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which also effectively works

The words "effectively works" come from a Greek word meaning to put forth power, be operative. We get the English word "energize" from this Greek word [energeō]. The Word of God effectively works in our lives. The word "effectively works" is in the present tense indicating that this is an ongoing work.

The words "effectively works" literally mean to work in. This is inherent power. Once the Word of God enters our heart, it is effective in what it does to our souls, because it has inherent power to work where other powers cannot work. The Word of God becomes effective through applying it to our own experience (cf. Jeremiah 23:29; Isaiah 49:2; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).

in you who believe

The word "believe" is in the present tense indicating continuing action. The Thessalonians continued to believe in the power of the Word of God to change their lives. The Word brings ongoing evidence of changing lives. They endured trial by God's grace (2:14).

"So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Samuel 3: 19).

Paul's team employed strategies to reach the Thessalonians, but they put their confidence in the Word of God to change lives (1:5; cf. Hebrews 4:12).

Principle

If we apply the Bible to our experience, it will continually change our lives.

Application

The truth of the Word of God constantly applied to our problems changes our hearts. When we receive the Bible as the Word of God, it will energize us to live powerfully beyond what our natural powers would allow us to do.

1 Thessalonians 2:14

"For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans..."

For you, brethren,

Paul appeals to them as brothers in Christ. He entreats them on the ground of their spiritual accord in Christ.

became imitators of the churches

The New Testament always uses the word "imitators" in a good sense (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; Hebrews 6:12). An imitator is a copyist, someone who mimics. The idea is more than just following any old pattern; the idea is to follow an authoritative pattern. Imitation involves responding to the principle, as well as copying the behavior. Our authority rests on the superiority of our models (1:6). Discipleship implies conformity to a standard.

"I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in

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Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:14-16).

"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus.

The Thessalonians were to imitate the churches that were "of God" and "in Christ Jesus." All churches share in common the blessed privilege of union with Christ.

Judea is in southern Palestine, one of the provinces of Israel. Like the Thessalonians, churches in Judea suffered persecution for their faith.

For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen,

The Thessalonians were to learn from the adversity suffered by their countrymen. The word "suffered" occurs 42 times in the New Testament mostly concerning Christ's sufferings and those of His people (Acts 9:16; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 1:12). Suffering here has to do with suffering for becoming Christians. Their persecutors may have been Jews (Acts 17:5,13).

Suffering is a mark of those who follow Christ. Often our most bitter enemies are our neighbors, because our lives stand in stark contrast to their lives.

just as they did from the Judeans

Christians in Judea suffered from the prejudice of Judean Jews. Thessalonians endured persecution from their Jewish neighbors in Thessalonica.

"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).

Principle

There is always a price to pay for aggressive commitment to Christ.

Application

Every generation of churches that are aggressive with their faith face persecution. The gospel is not popular when it tells people that they need a Savior because of their sin. This assaults human pride. "Why do I need a Savior? I am a good person. I live a moral life." Those who are faithful to Christ will not allow other people's pride to intimidate them into not sharing their faith.

1 Thessalonians 2:15

"...who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men..."

Paul levels six charges against the Jews in verses fifteen and sixteen.

who killed both the Lord Jesus

First, the Jews in Judea killed the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem Judea (2:14).

"Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18).

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:22-24).

and their own prophets,

Secondly, the Jews also killed their very own prophets.

and have persecuted us;

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Thirdly, the Jews also persecuted Christians throughout Judea. The word "persecuted" comes from two words: out and to pursue. They pursued Christians out of Judea. This carries the idea of driving out or banishing Christians systematically from their province. They put together a program to harass Christians.

and they do not please God

Fourthly, these Jews were not acceptable to God. They thought that they pleased God by their fanatic religious ideas but their zeal did not please God at all. No rationalization justifies this kind of action.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8).

Those who please God do not primarily please themselves or others. They please God by faith.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

and are contrary to all men

Fifthly, the Jews were "contrary to all men." The word "contrary" means over against. The religionists of Judea operated in a way that was contrary to or a reversal of how people should operate. They used hostility as their mode of operation. This is perversity. Paul himself, before his conversion, was one of these persecutors (Acts 26:14-15).

Principle

An operating principle of the Christian life is to live to please the Lord.

Application

Are you living to please the Lord? This may mean that you may not please your friends at times. If they criticize you, so be it. People constantly hurt by what others say about them

are usually ineffectual. It is very difficult to live a dynamic Christian life and wear a thin skin.

"Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him" (2 Corinthians 5: 9).

1 Thessalonians 2:16

"...forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost"

forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved,

We now come to the sixth charge Paul levels against the Jews. The word "forbidding" means to hinder, restrain, withhold, forbid. The Jews prevented Christians from carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. The Jews did not want Christ as their Savior and they did not want the Gentiles to come to Christ either.

so as always to fill up the measure of their sins;

The words "fill up" come from a Greek word meaning to fill up adequately, completely. The Jews so persisted in their antagonism and unbelief that they completely engrossed themselves in negative volition toward God. They rounded out their sin and brought it to completion. They sped up God's judgment against themselves.

"Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them'" (Matthew 13: 13-15).

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but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost

The words "come upon" mean to anticipate, to reach, to attain. God's wrath has reached them sooner than they expected it and it overtook them. It is bad business to hinder the gospel. God establishes consequences to deal with those who would hinder the gospel from going out to the world. Hard-hearted antagonism to the gospel always incurs God's wrath.

Principle

Those who oppose the gospel will get their comeuppance.

Application

It is possible to fill the full complement of sin. God will suddenly and surely seal the fate of those who oppose the gospel. The extreme limit of God's wrath will come down upon them. We can do absolutely nothing for them then. Unless they repent they will finally get their comeuppance.

1 Thessalonians 2:17

"But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire"

Paul now describes the relationship he had with the Thessalonians since the founding of the church one year earlier.

But we,

The word "but" contrasts the experience of Paul's team with the Thessalonians to the bad experiences in Judea (1 Thessalonians 2:15-16).

brethren,

Again, Paul uses a thoughtful reference to brotherhood to appeal to what they had in common spiritually.

having been taken away from you

In Acts 17, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke ministered for three Sabbath days in

Thessalonica, but then hostile Thessalonians chased them out of town. They left for Berea. Over a year elapsed before Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, while residing in Corinth.

"Then the brethren [in Thessalonica] immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 17: 10).

The words "taken away" means to make an orphan of someone. It comes from two words: from and to orphan [orphanizw]. This is the only time the New Testament uses this word. The separation of Paul's team from the Thessalonians for a year caused them emotional pain. Paul viewed himself as an orphan separated from his family. The persecution tore Paul from his family. The frenzy of persecution in Thessalonica forced the team out of the city and kept them from coming back.

for a short time

Paul's sorrow was alleviated by two comforting thoughts. First, the separation was "for a short time."

in presence, not in heart,

Secondly, the Thessalonians were out of sight, but not out of mind. Paul was not with them "in presence," meaning physically, but he was with them "in heart." Paul's love for the Thessalonians was not mere sentimentalism that lasted just as long as he was with them. It is not by choice that Paul writes 1 Thessalonians from Corinth. He fled Thessalonica because of the intensity of persecution. He had a heart for the Thessalonians.

endeavored more eagerly to see your face

The word "endeavored" means to make haste. Paul's team made great effort to return to Thessalonica. Paul did not use the absence as a pretext for forgetting them, as some of his critics insinuated. He wanted to make sure that he established them in their faith.

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"For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thessalonians 3:9-10).

"For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me" (Romans 1:11-12).

with great desire

The team had great motivation to return to Thessalonica, not because of obligation but because they loved the Thessalonians. It felt like the severing of a parent from a child. Paul redoubled his efforts to see the Thessalonians in the face of satanic opposition (1 Thessalonians 2:18). He yearned to see them again. He would never leave in a lurch those to whom he ministered.

Principle

Spiritually minded people have a heart for God's own.

Application

Our time on earth is short and unsure. Only in heaven will there be no more parting. We may never see some of our Christian friends again on this earth, but one day we will be with them for eternity.

True Christian fellowship does not reside on sentiment, but in our common bond in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:18

"Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us"

Therefore we wanted to come to you—

It was Paul's intention to come back to Thessalonica.

even I, Paul, time and again—

Paul made at least two attempts to come to Thessalonica. Both times Satan, frustrated his plans. Later in the book, he sought God's direction about going to Thessalonica. Paul constantly sought God's mind in his ministry to the Thessalonians.

"Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you" (1 Thessalonians 3:11).

Principle

We must seek God's direction to do His will.

Application

Believers must always seek God's direction. Otherwise, Satan can hinder our ministry, if we do it strictly in human powers. Vision building, goal setting and strategy making are good, but without God's direction, they are vacuous.

but Satan hindered us

The word "hindered" comes from two words: to cut and in. Satan cut into the plans of Paul. He tried to impede him by breaking up his plans and placing obstacles in his path. It is always the strategy of Satan to thwart any program to win people to Christ or to build them up in the faith.

Satan confronts godly strategy with his own strategy. This is the source of our problems spiritually. Not many Christians consider the impact of Satan upon their lives. God considers it important enough to give believers a suit of armor to defend themselves.

"Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but

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against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:10-13).

The book of Acts says that men drove Paul's team from their ministry in Thessalonica. This passage points to Satan as the source of this problem. It is clear that Satan uses men as his emissaries to accomplish his ends. We do not see Satan physically but we can see people doing his work.

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one" (2 Thessalonians 3:1-3).

Although Satan hindered Paul's ministry, he did not daunt his ministry. Paul in writing to the Thessalonians blessed the church with his two epistles for 2000 years. Satan cannot bind the Word of God.

"Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:8-10).

Principle

Satan will do all he can to obstruct the work of the Lord.

Application

You have faced times in your life when you tried to do God's will but found many obstacles along the way. You may have met opposition

from even good people. That is Satan thwarting your ministry.

Satan may frustrate our ministries but God always providentially allows him to do so. Satan is not sovereign. He can do nothing without God's permission. He is a finite creature albeit a very powerful finite creature. God is omnipotent; Satan is potent. Satan is mighty; God is almighty.

God originally created Lucifer a brilliant, sinless angel. Later he rebelled against God and became the leader of a vast worldwide organization of demons. Satan is not omnipresent so he put together a worldwide organization of fallen angels that are his henchmen. He can send these emissaries to do extensive injury to the people of God and to the plan of world-evangelism.

At times, God allows Satan to deal with believers. Nothing could happen to Job without God's permission. God concurs with each event that comes into our lives.

"And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.' Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?' So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? 'Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 'But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!' And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.' So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD" (Job 1:7-12).

God always allows satanic obstruction for a reason. He uses these frustrations to mature us

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in Christ. As Paul did not concede defeat, so we must not allow one obstruction to become an absolute barricade against everything we might do for God.

1 Thessalonians 2:19

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

Paul asks a rhetorical question in this verse and answers it in the latter part of this verse and the next.

For

Paul now gives his reason for his eagerness to see them.

what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?

Paul puts his work in perspective. He views himself standing at the Judgment Seat of Christ and receiving rewards from the Lord Jesus Christ for his labor in Thessalonica. Paul's "hope" rests on living a certain kind of life in time, a life of evangelism. Paul has confidence that he will see Thessalonians in heaven.

This is also his "joy." There is no greater joy than seeing someone come to Christ. Paul's joy was the thought of leading someone to Christ and then to know that he will spend eternity in heaven.

"Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved" (Philippians 4:1).

Leading people to Christ will be Paul's "crown of rejoicing" at the Judgment Seat of Christ. His crown is his converts. The word "crown" is the victor's crown, the crown of introducing someone to Christ. There is victory in winning people to Christ, or rather, in allowing God to win people to Christ through us. Those who never introduce anyone to Christ will not receive this crown.

Is it not even you

The Thessalonian converts' presence at the coming of Christ was the hope, joy and crown of rejoicing of the gospel team.

in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

Paul answers his own question. His reward will be that the Thessalonians who received Christ as their personal Savior will meet the Lord at the Rapture. Winning people to Christ is an eternal investment. It makes life worthwhile. What a day of rejoicing that will be when we see in heaven people we've led to Christ and finally see Christ Himself!

The word "coming" is a term that conveys the idea of presence. One day we will be in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. In First Thessalonians, this word refers to the Rapture (4:16,17) or to the period from the Rapture to the Second Coming.

Principle

Those we win to Christ are our hope, joy and crown of glory.

Application

The coming of Christ is a great motivation for believers. This motivation sustains us through many trials and tribulations. We keep eternal values in view. If we view life from a secular viewpoint, we will not get God's perspective on the purpose for our lives. In times of trouble, we need to catch the divine viewpoint on things. In this way, we will not allow trouble to overcome us.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

By keeping our eyes on eternal values, we live by faith.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [chapter 11, those who lived by faith], let us lay aside every

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weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Our faith comes from the Word. The Bible keeps our mind on eternal promises and truths.

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

The Christian does not look back but looks forward to his glorious future. It is not biblical to live in the past with all its regrets. It is the biblical perspective to live in an attitude of looking for the return of Christ. We will finally meet the One we love. O, what a joy it will be.

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

1 Thessalonians 2:20

"For you are our glory and joy"

The word "you" is emphatic in the Greek. "You and especially you are our glory and joy."

The word "glory" means estimation, repute. It is Paul's honor to introduce his converts to the Lord Jesus Christ. When he sees the Lord, he will know that his team's glory will be people in heaven because of their witness. This is legitimate pride because it is based on what God did through them.

"Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient— in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not

where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written: 'To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand'" (Romans 15:17-21).

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Paul stakes his entire reputation in eternity on winning those without Christ.

Principle

Our reputation in eternity will be based, in part, on winning people to Christ.

Application

God values winning people to Christ.

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world'" (Acts 26:14-18).

Do you have a part in the building of Christ's Kingdom? Will people point to you that you had a part in bringing them into the Kingdom?