

***“Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians —
Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica and Its Eternal Fruit”***

Introduction:

- ***As we shared in our last fellowship, these two letters, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, are the only letters to an assembly in Paul's writings where there are really NO HARSH WORDS to be found, only praise and thanksgiving. Amen. May these words be a constant encouragement to us all.***

Review:

- ***Last time we looked carefully into Paul's first chapter of the letter to the Thessalonians.***
- ***We saw how Paul's Greeting Was Multi-Faceted (Verse 1)***
 - ***The emphasis in this opening verse is on grace and peace. The two do go together if we receive these great gifts as the Lord so desires of us. What is our response to this “salutation”. We have both grace and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Every believer does. But we also may have the grace and the peace for this very day in which we are living and that is what the apostle is emphasizing here. Amen?***
- ***Paul's Thanksgiving Was Well-Founded (Verses 2-4)***
 - ***We could devote ourselves to only this one verse here (verse 3) and that would be a profitable study. Again,***
 - 3 “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father
 - 4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”
 - ***There is such confidence here and it forms a commanding theme in this letter. The apostle had his confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ and it carried through every aspect of his life and ministry. It provided an assurance as well that is powerfully communicated in these few words. It should be an encouragement to us as we reflect on our own walk with the Lord starting its beginning days. We knew not where we were but the Lord God knew, and he was faithful to his***

plan and program for us just like he was here with the Thessalonians. He sent Paul to them with that great message of eternal redemption. Who did he send our way? Do you recall?

- ***The Testimony of the Thessalonians Was Not Forgotten (Verses 5-10)***
 - ***The spiritual power of a godly example is underscored here in several ways. Such a life has consequences though they may be in fact invisible to many. But the Lord knows them that are his and he knows intimately their needs and his work in them to meet those needs.***

1 Thess. 1:5-8

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

1 Thess. 1:9-10 [This theme will be continued in the second chapter where will be dwelling today]

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, [even] Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

- ***These verses here were our main focus in our last lesson here in this letter. They well summarize Paul's main emphasis in this letter. And that is simply this: God had worked mightily in Paul as he came to them in Thessalonika and then he had worked mightily also through them as a consequence. One Testimony had led directly to another, and another, and so forth. Isn't that most wonderful to consider? The work of God always "multiplies" itself as it works. That is the nature of fruit bearing!***

- ***And now for Paul's final words in this chapter. The hope of the Thessalonians went far beyond the affairs of this life even into eternity. The return of the Lord before the beginning of the Tribulation period is very much on his mind here:***
- 10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, [even] Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.
- ***So, the spiritual power of a godly example was again underscored in so many ways. What about our testimony? Has Paul, as described here, been our model in life and ministry? And what about the church as gathered around us? Is it a "typical" church indeed? This is such a serious question, isn't it?***
 - ***Chapter two is structured similarly to chapter one with an emphasis on testimony, its power and fruit, and an eternal resurrection hope in God.***

Our Scripture Today: 1 Thess. 2:1-12

1 Thess. 2:1-12 [The Gospel, Its Value and Consequence — Recalling the Beginning Again]

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:
 2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.
 3 For our exhortation [was] not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:
 4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.
 5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God [is] witness:
 6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor [yet] of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

[Paul's Sacred Ministry in Thessalonica — Through An Analogy Knowable by All]

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:
 8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.
 9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.
 10 Ye [are] witnesses, and God [also], how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father [doth] his children,
12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

Our Outline:

- ***The Gospel, Its Value and Consequence — Recalling the Beginning Again***
- ***Paul's Sacred Ministry in Thessalonica — Through an Analogy Knowable by All***

I. The Gospel, Its Value and Consequence — Recalling The Beginning Again:

I love these verses . . . or if they are new to you, that you will love them as I do.

[READ] 1 Thess. 2:1-4

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3 For our exhortation [was] not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

- ***The second chapter begins with a simple request: just remember how it was when I came to your city some years ago . . .***
- ***Paul had come into town and began preaching even though there was good reason to think that what had occurred in Philippi would be repeated here. As Paul knew so well by now, persecution has a way of following the bold proclamation of the gospel of Christ.***
 - ***And it had done just that as verse 5 indicates. But, nevertheless, Paul preached boldly and many believed beginning a great outreach for the gospel here in this city and beyond.***
- ***Acts 17 gives us the history of this:***

[READ] Acts 17:1-6

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also...

- **Verse 2** — But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, **we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.**
 - ***So Paul boldly preached Christ in this city and did not consider the possible consequences. For he was bold “in our God”, as he puts it here, even with much contention, and, perhaps, his own martyrdom. Many have suffered the same. I think of Tyndale, just to pick one example. He dared to translate the Bible into English in the early 16th century when it was illegal to possess a copy of the Bible unless one was “licensed” by the Roman church. He was strangled and then his body burned at the stake by the church. His dying words were that he hoped that everyone, even the lowest “servant” or “ploughman”. Tyndale, along with hundreds of others were killed for their faith and bold opposition to the rule of the Pope. They truly did follow in Paul’s footsteps in that regard, didn’t they?***

Our view of “the faith” today and its heritage and meaning is so lacking in comparison, wouldn’t you agree. Peace and harmony is the order of the day now, not boldness! And the consequences of that are visible in the churches. The church subservient, not the church triumphant. The church as a social gathering, not a heavenly organism. And, last not but certainly not least, the gospel as a rule of how to have a better life, not as the gateway truth for heaven and eternal life in the

***very presence of our Lord Jesus and his heavenly father.
Amen.***

- ***Only if the true gospel is preached (or shared by another believer) may sinners be saved. Yes, some are saved today through various media resources, but even there it is true. Of that I am convinced. If it was true then as Paul writes here, then it is still true today in our so called “post” world, whether post-modern or, much more accurately, post-christian.***
- ***Verses 3 & 4 — For our exhortation [was] not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.***
 - ***This must be the byword of all who would seek to be a true and authentic messenger of the good news of Jesus Christ. But is it?***
- ***I remember well the very first chapel service at seminary in San Francisco so many years ago. Its focus was on these same words which were also the theme verses for the seminary itself. I hope the students took them to heart and that they were to become the foundation stone of their teaching ministries:***
 - ***“our exhortation [was] not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile”: There were no fleshly motives here and they all had good reason to believe Paul. “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel”: These are such personal and powerful words, aren’t they?***
 - ***“even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts”: Amen and amen! God and God only was Paul’s judge though many would follow after him on his missionary journeys and would claim exactly the opposite. That is why he mentions it so often in his letters. He is not boasting in himself here but in the Lord.***

II. Paul’s Sacred Ministry in Thessalonica — An Analogy Knowable by All:

Let’s dwell on these following verses now this morning to gain the full benefit for they are truly powerful words. They were written so long ago

but their relevance for today is the same as it was then. They were transforming. I pray that they are for us as well.

Take Note: The key words here are “Witness”, “Nurse”, and “Father”. They speak to a shared, common experience. Sadly, they are not widely so shared today but surely they were not then either. But the apostle uses these words and the associated analogies so fittingly here. For who does not know (or desire) the love of a mother for her children, of a father for his. Even in broken families those harmed so thoroughly wish they had had what others do. We all know some who still seek, after many years, to know their birth parent or parents. That desire for “completeness” is built into the human heart the way God made each of us.

[READ] 1 Thess. 2:5-6

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; **God [is] witness:**

6 Nor of men sought we **glory**, neither of you, nor [yet] of others, when **we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.**

[READ] 1 Thess. 2:7-8

7 But **we were gentle** among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, **we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls**, because ye were dear unto us.

- **“God is witness . . . ye are witnesses [verses 5, 10]:**
 - “ For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness”: **They all knew God was his witness or he could not have written these words.**
- **Verse 6 & 7 —** “Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor [yet] of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. **... we were gentle ... as a nurse cherishes her children”:**
 - **New babes and younger children are the focus here and the analogy is clear. He also again refers to his own self-sacrifice in comparison to that of a nurse and her children. No one apparently (except for false teachers, that is) could deny the truth of this or he would not have written this as he did.**

- Verse 8 — “**we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls**, because ye were dear unto us.”:

- ***Does this not in a profound way underscore his earlier statement in verses 5 & 6. In fact, he is further explaining those earlier words here by the words "also our own souls". Not only was he so intent to share the gospel boldly, BUT ALSO along with that, also his very life.***

[READ] 1 Thess. 2:9-12

9 For ye **remember, brethren, our labour and travail**: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, **we preached unto you the gospel of God.**

10 Ye [are] witnesses, and God [also], how holily and justly and **unblameably we behaved** ourselves among you that believe:

11 As ye know how **we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father [doth] his children,**

12 That ye would walk worthy of **God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.**

- **Verse 9** — “For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God”:
- ***This is a reference to a very compelling, though today often dismissed, Pauline sub-theme, that he supported himself by the hard work of his trade as a tentmaker! Except in unusual circumstances (like when he was in prison, for example), he did not accept gifts and offerings, especially from those to whom he was ministering. These verses are all echoed later when he writes to the Corinthians in an even more detailed way:***

2 Cor. 12:14-15

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

- ***Well, he was “spent” indeed. This is such a powerful statement - whatever lies the false teachers were telling.***
- ***Verse 10 — “... ye are witnesses”:***
 - ***He was the witness to them and they became witnesses of how he had been used by God in their midst. We need to compare our lives to this, do we not? Remember the exhortations in Philippians and in chapter one here that he is our example and type. The Thessalonians surely had come to know that.***
 - ***Take note also that the word for “witness” is “martyr” in the Greek. Amen.***
- ***Verse 12 -- “That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory”:***
 - ***Walking worthily of God is not gaining salvation by our works. No, it is living as is fitting for a saint. Other scriptures make this clear:***

[READ] 1 Cor. 6:9-11

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.
- ***Here we find the first reference here to the kingdom believers under grace should look for. We should consider also the Apostle’s last such reference in 2 Tim. 4:18: “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve [me] unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom [be] glory for ever and ever.”***
- ***Paul writes of the kingdom of God often but not often of the coming Millennial Kingdom that Christ will establish at his second coming. Here the references are to the overruling power of Christ over the church and its affairs. That is the “heavenly kingdom” of 2 Tim. 4:18.***

Our Final Exhortation:

- ***We have Paul as our example as did the Thessalonian believers. They followed and were fruitful amid many trials and tribulations. Will we?***

1 Thess. 2:5-8

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God [is] witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor [yet] of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.