



Corinth Missionary Baptist Church
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SUMMER – 2023

June 2023 – August 2023

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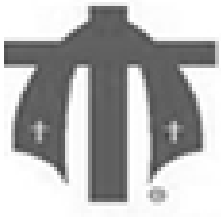
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“Diligent study of these lessons will not only bless you spiritually, but also aid you in discovering God's plan for your own life.”

-John Alva Owston



CORINTH
MISSIONARY
BAPTIST
CHURCH
ADULT
SUNDAY SCHOOL
CLASS



ADULT

WINTER SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

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You can also follow the lesson by joining live each Sunday morning via our website:

<https://www.thecityoffaith.org/sundayschool>



Sunday, June 4, 2023

Lesson 1 - "A New Life in the Home"

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:4–17

Background Scripture: Ephesians 5:1–6:4

Lesson Text: Ephesians 5:21–6:4

Ephesians 5:21–33

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Ephesians 6:1–4

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. List Paul's commands for wives, husbands, children, and parents.
2. Evaluate his or her family relationships in light of Paul's commands.
3. State one change to make to align his or her family with God's Word.

INTRODUCTION – Serious Problem

"I hate divorce." Do you ever hear anyone say that? Children of divorced parents may say it with their actions, if not literally with their words. People who have been divorced may say it with their misery. So do their friends and loved ones who watch the misery unfold. Ministers and counselors who help couples are certainly no fans of divorce. God himself hates divorce (see Malachi 2:16, where it is called "putting away").

As painful as divorce is, many families who stay together don't do much better at modeling God's love for one another as the Scriptures command. As a result, children may reject their parents' values after experiencing such dysfunction. For the sake of our children and the future of the church, we need to make sure our family relationships conform to Scripture rather than to cultural norms.

Lesson Background

Paul knew the families of the Ephesian church well. After all, he had spent about three years among them (Acts 20:31). It was the Ephesian elders who had given him such an emotional farewell as he set sail for Jerusalem (Acts 20:13–38).

That farewell was about five years in the past when Paul wrote to his beloved Ephesians. The families of

that church were under pressure (compare Revelation 2:1–7). Parents had to bring up their children in the shadow of the great pagan temple to Artemis. Much of the economy of the city revolved around that edifice (Acts 19:23–41). The temptation of “to get along, you have to go along” is not new to the twenty-first century.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WIVES AND HUSBANDS—Ephesians 5:21-33

1. How will the Spirit's control be evident in human relationships (Ephesians 5:21)?

Our lesson text isn't really the opening line of Ephesians 5:22 and following. Rather, verse 21 sums up some of Paul's thoughts leading to Ephesians 5:20. In verse 18 Paul urged his readers to be filled with the Spirit, yielding to His control as completely as a drunkard succumbs to the control of the wine in him. He then began to enumerate the results of the Spirit's control: praise (v. 19), thanksgiving (v. 20), and now mutual submission in human relationships (v. 21).

Submitting ourselves to one another implies humility. Paul expressed the same thought elsewhere as preferring one another in honor (Rom. 12:10) and esteeming others as better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3). This can only be done "in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). Submission to the Lord is necessary for us to cultivate submission to one another. Our relationship with Him always influences our relationships with others.

2. What does Paul command Christian wives to do in relation to their husbands (vs. 22-24)?

The meaning of this verse has been hotly debated. That word submit strikes a raw nerve in many. Genesis 3:16 reminds us that Paul is not coming up with something new. And 1 Peter 3:1 is similar. The reason for the instruction we see here is the subject of the next verse.

Why should the wife submit? Because “the husband is the head of the wife” (v. 23). The word head is often symbolic in the Bible for authority (examples: 2 Samuel 22:44; Ephesians 1:22). Some say this is degrading to women. Yet are we demeaned if we submit to other authorities such as the police, church

elders, or the boss at work? We would never question whether the church should follow the leadership of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:24). In the same way, the phrase "as unto the Lord" (v. 22) means the wife is to submit in the same spirit that she would submit to Christ. This would be a spirit of love and humility, not chafing at the prospect of being coerced.

We should remember two points: first, Paul was addressing believers, who are to be noted for their love and humility, and second, he had an equally demanding requirement for husbands. This combination guards against abuse.

3. With what kind of love is a husband to love his wife (v. 25)?

The husband is not to become a tyrant. Paul commanded, "Husbands, love your wives." The word for "love" indicates a devotion that results in actions that benefit the other person. It does not depend on how attractive his wife is or what mood he happens to be in on a given day. Even if she should fall short of her duty, his devotion to her must continue. This love includes sacrificial actions.

So that there would be no question of the devotion this love entails, Paul compared it to the love Christ demonstrated for the church in giving Himself for us (v. 25b). So constant and sacrificial was Jesus' love for His spiritual body that He went to the cross for it. This is the model for the Christian husband. He should be prepared to make any sacrifice for his wife, even laying down his life. This standard thus protects the well-being of the Christian wife.

4. What has Christ done for the church? What further goal for it does He have (vs. 26, 27)?

Christ's example goes beyond His sacrifice to save His church from hell. He purposes to make the church into something clean, holy, glorious, and without blemish for Himself. "Sanctify" speaks of setting it apart for Himself. "Cleansing" gives the means by which He has made it fit for Him. This cleansing was done "with the washing of water by the word."

Some commentators have tried to connect this washing imagery with water baptism, but it need not

mean this. God's Word itself is considered a cleansing agent (cf. John 15:3; 17:17). Paul was most likely referring to the Spirit's cleansing as He applies the spoken Word to the lives of His people. But Christ has an even greater goal in mind—claiming the church as His spot-less bride at His coming (Eph. 5:27). It will then be "glorious" because every "spot" and "wrinkle" will be erased. All imperfections that now hinder God's people from glorifying Him will be gone. They will be "holy and without blemish" (cf. 1:4).

5. Why should husbands care for their wives as they do for themselves (vs. 28-30)?

Paul carried forward the thought of Christ wanting the absolute best for His bride. After all, it is His body, inseparably joined with Himself. To glorify the church is to glorify Him. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies," lavishing the same care and concern on them that they would on themselves. Whoever loves his wife is merely demonstrating his love for himself, for they have become "one flesh" (v. 31). They are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Pet. 3:7). In God's plan, each is incomplete without the other.

Paul argued further that it is unnatural to hate one's own flesh (Eph. 5:29). When we are commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:39), it is assumed that we naturally love ourselves. This is also Paul's assumption here. We nourish and cherish our own bodies, so husbands should extend this same care to their wives, who are one with them.

Even in advising husbands, Paul continued to think of Christ's care of the church. All that it needs for spiritual life and growth is provided in abundance (cf. Eph. 4:7- 16). Christ does so because "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (5:30). While many Greek manuscripts do not include "of his flesh, and of his bones," these phrases

do reinforce the unity between Christ and His own. They recall Adam's delighted comment when he first saw Eve (Gen. 2:23).

To be continued...

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY Willie Ferrell
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, June 11, 2023

Lesson 2 - "New Life in the Home" (continued)

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:4-17

Background Scripture: Ephesians 5:1-6:4

Lesson Text: Ephesians 5:21-6:4

Ephesians 5:21-33

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Ephesians 6:1-4

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WIVES AND HUSBANDS—Ephesians 5:21-33

(continued)

6. What is God's pattern for marriage in every generation (vs. 31, 32)?

Paul now quotes Genesis 2:24, the decree that established the marriage bond. "For this cause" (Eph. 5:31) gives the reason for the bond: Eve was taken from Adam and thus became an extension of him. Thus, God's pattern for marriage ever after was that a man shall leave his parents' home and be joined to his wife in a new home. The two of them then become one flesh and as such propagate the human race. Husband and wife thus belong to each other and should treat one another according to this truth.

In speaking of this great creation principle, Paul added, "This is a great mystery" (Eph. 5:32). By this he meant that Genesis 2:24 contains more divine truth than appears on the surface. Male and female becoming "one flesh" in marriage is itself something that transcends understanding. But Paul seems to say that God had even deeper truth in mind to be illustrated by marriage.

For his part, however, Paul was content to reveal just one aspect of that truth: "I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). God had given Paul special insight concerning the church as the body of Christ (cf. 3:3-13), and the marriage relationship is an apt illustration of this truth.

7. Why does Paul repeat himself in verse 33?

Paul now summarizes his exhortations. To husbands he says, "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself." If we think Paul's emphasis is a bit redundant at this point, let us remember that ancient pagans and even Jews usually regarded wives as inferior. This is an exhortation; men today need constantly as well. Paul's admonition to wives is that she should reverence, or respect, her husband. She should not fear him as a tyrant, but respect him as a leader.

Perhaps you have admired the skill of a couple performing a waltz in a motion picture. The man leads confidently and lovingly; the woman follows gracefully and beautifully. Jesus Christ wants to take our marriages and turn them into a beautiful dance that illustrates His love for His bride. When Christian husbands and wives love each other, the world says, "Look at that beautiful couple!" And God gets the glory.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN—Ephesians 6:1-4 9

8. Why are children to obey and honor their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3)?

As relations between couples are to be controlled by the Spirit, so also are those between parents and children. Paul stated children's duty two ways, adding a reason for each. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." There is only one qualifying phrase in this command—"in the Lord."

Paul was addressing Christian families, where parents and children both are living in the bonds of salvation. This command is certainly most difficult for the child whose parents do not know God or who are not exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit. So many excuses seem legitimate: my father is a jerk; my mother's demands are unrealistic; he's not even a Christian; she drinks; he's a hypocrite; she's not even my real mom; they don't care about me. Even so, children are to obey their parents. Only one reason for this command is given: it is the right thing to do. Since God established the family with this order of authority, it is inherently right.

The duty of children is restated in the next verse: "Honour thy father and mother" (Eph. 6:2). This principle from the Old Testament law is broader than childhood obedience. It demands giving honor to one's parents at every stage of life, including care for them in the weakness of old age. This is "the first commandment with promise."

The promise is twofold: it will go well with you, and you will live long on the earth. Does it not go well with children when they obey their parents, and does it not go poorly with them when they disobey? Consider a teenager who comes to his parents requesting permission to go out with his friends that evening. If he has been sour, complaining, even outright disobedient throughout the day, he is less likely to be granted his request. If on the other hand he has been pleasant, obedient, and hardworking, his parents are more likely to trust him with privileges.

This is not a blanket guarantee of long life to every obedient child, for some die young. It is a general principle that the child who follows the sound teaching of godly parents lays a foundation of restraint, industry, sobriety, and godliness that will, apart from God's intervention, prolong his life.

9. How does Paul tell parents to bring up their children (v. 4)?

Fathers will give account before God for how they handled (or didn't handle) their parental duties. The father's responsibility is summed up with two commands, one negative and one positive. The negative command is to provoke not your children to wrath. Have you ever seen a child embittered toward his or her father? This tragedy does not usually happen overnight. It happens when a series of emotional wounds go unattended, and the wounds fester until they become an infected pool of emotions. Consider some of the ways a father can embitter his children: belittling them; disciplining too strictly; setting unrealistic expectations; breaking promises; being uninvolved at home—the list goes on.

Paul moves on to the positive command: bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The word translated "bring them up" is translated

“nourisheth” in Ephesians 5:29. Fathers are to nourish their children, but this is talking about spiritual rather than physical nourishment.

The two words translated nurture and admonition have to do with loving discipline and correction. Fathers are to be involved in their children’s lives, with the goal that their children will be brought up under the discipline of God’s Word. However, they are to do this lovingly, not harshly lest they embitter their children (compare Deuteronomy 6:7; Colossians 3:21).

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. By God's design, it is proper for family members to show submission (Eph. 5:21).
2. A wife can submit more easily to her husband when she recognizes his God-given authority and accountability (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 3:7).
3. Loving one's wife as Christ loves the church calls for the greatest level of submission (Eph. 5:25-27).
4. Husbands gain their wives' respect by loving and caring for them as they do for themselves (vs. 28-33).
5. God honors those who properly honor and obey their parents (6:1-3).
6. Fathers, your words and actions can either help or harm your children, so choose wisely (v. 4).

CONCLUSION

Our culture today demonstrates how our families are falling apart because we have not followed God's plans for new life in the home. When we follow His Word, we can restore our homes with new life. Imagine that the elders of your church came to you and said, “We are beginning a new discipleship program, and we believe you are the perfect candidate to lead a small group of people in this new program. We want you to prayerfully consider investing a significant portion of your time into three disciples we are going to assign to you.”

Later, you tell your spouse what the elders have asked of you. “I have thought and prayed about this all day,” you say. “I’m thinking that perhaps God is leading me to say yes to this opportunity. It will mean I will have to make some sacrifices. I will need to cut out some activities so that I can have time to spend

with these three people. I’ll have to get my own spiritual habits in order so that I can be an example. We’ll have to let them come into our home so they can witness a godly marriage. It’s a little frightening to think of this kind of responsibility, but I really think we can do it. Imagine what it would be like to really make a difference in the lives of these three individuals!”

Perhaps the elders have not come to you asking you to lead a discipleship group. But if you are a husband/wife and/or father/mother, Jesus Christ has commissioned you to “love your wife as Christ loved the church” or “respect your husband” and “bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” You have your marching orders. Will you make the sacrifices necessary to succeed?

PRAYER

Father, thank You for creating the family. We pray for our marriages. Forgive us when we are a poor illustration to the world of Christ’s love for the church. Empower us with Your Spirit that we will love one another with the sacrificial love that You demonstrated when You were on this earth. Help us to live in such a way that our children will want to follow our Lord Jesus. In His name (Jesus) we pray. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Illustrate Christ’s love by loving one another.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week’s lesson, “Understand and Live Truth”, will help us look at the teachings of the church that relate to living in Christian community. Study Colossians 1:1-14.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY Willie Ferrell
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, June 18, 2023

Lesson 3 - "Understand and Live Truth"

Lesson Text: **Colossians 1:1-14**

Background Scripture: **Colossians 1**

Devotional Reading: **Jeremiah 29:10-14**

Colossians 2:1-10

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; 2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to show how Christians can live in truth and wisdom in community by praying for one another.

Principle: to assert that Christians are called to live the truth and wisdom of God.

Application: to demonstrate that when we as Christians pray for one another, we can grow in wisdom and the truth of God together.

INTRODUCTION

The city of Colosse was located on the Lycus River in the Roman province of Asia (in the western part of present-day Turkey). Since Paul focused his ministry

on the larger cities, he had not preached in Colosse or visited the church there (Col. 2:1). But during his two-year-three month stay in Ephesus on his third missionary tour, the gospel had made its way outward from there to other parts of the province (Acts 19:10, 26). Colosse was probably evangelized then. The church that came from this effort was primarily Gentile (Col. 1:27).

Now Paul was a prisoner at Rome. He has been charged with crimes by the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem (see Acts 24:5, 6). As a Roman citizen, Paul has exercised his right to appeal his case to Caesar (Acts 25:11).

He has been taken from Judea to Rome in order that his appeal to the emperor might be heard. Thus, he is in a house in Rome where he can receive visitors but where there is a guard present at all times. Timothy, Paul's trusted helper, is there with him. Epaphras, a minister from Colosse, visited him and brought news of the church (Col. 1:7,8). Some of it was disturbing. False teaching was threatening the faith of believers. So, Paul sought to combat this through sound teaching, especially about the Person and work of Christ. The passage in this lesson sets the stage for this instruction.

GREETING TO THE SAINTS (Colossians 1:1-2)

1. Who was Paul's companion as he wrote Colossians? How did his status differ from Paul's (Colossians 1:1)?

First, Paul introduced himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ." Though "apostle" can simply mean a delegate, Paul used the term in its strict sense of one who was commissioned directly by the risen Christ. It was especially important, when counteracting false teaching, that he establish his authority for a church he had never met. He wanted it known that the words

he wrote were in fact a message from Christ Himself. "By the will of God" shows that apostleship was not a vocation that Paul had chosen for himself. When he was persecuting the church, God stopped him in his tracks and revealed the special calling he was to follow (Acts 9:15,16). From that time on, Jesus Christ directed everything he did.

Paul also introduced his companion, "Timotheus our brother" (Col. 1:1). Timothy was with Paul so frequently that he was here introduced as an associate. But he was not an apostle, for he was not commissioned directly by Christ. He was a learner at the feet of the apostle.

2. What did Paul mean when he called the Colossians "saints" (v. 2)?

The reference to the saints and faithful brethren means that Paul's greeting is for the entirety of the Colossian church. This is not a letter intended just for one or two of the church leaders (contrast 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4). One of Paul's points of emphasis in Colossians is the appreciation he has for such faithful people (see Colossians 2:5,7). A faithful church is made up of faithful men and women acting both individually and collectively in ways that are consistent with their trust in Christ and His commandments. Christ is the source and foundation of this faith.

As is common in his letters, Paul gives a two-fold blessing to his readers. Grace reflects a traditional Greek style for greeting beloved friends. Peace (or shalom) is a Jewish blessing.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE SAINTS (Colossians 1:3-8)

3. How did the Colossians' faith affect their relationships to each other (vs. 3-5)?

Paul is unable to do much for the Colossians personally because of his situation. This does not hinder him from praying for them, however. Paul assured the Colossians that whenever he prayed, he gave thanks for them. For this church has been an encouragement to Paul. Paul specifically gave thanks for the Colossians' reception of the gospel. He had heard of their "**faith** in Christ Jesus" (v. 4).

This faith is manifested, in turn, in the **love** that they displayed to all believers. This love, exercised not out of the emotions, but as an act of the will, is a reflection of God's love for believers (1 John 3:14-18). It is significant that the Colossians exhibited love to all the saints. Godly love does not discriminate; it reaches across all kinds of human boundaries.

Combined with the Colossians' **faith** and **love** was "the **hope**" based on the promises "of the gospel" (v. 5). They have hope for the future, for they know that Heaven is their eternal home. The central element of this hope is the resurrection of Christ (compare 1 Peter 1:3, 4). Without the resurrection, the gospel is not true (see 1 Corinthians 15:14). Hopeful people tend to be happy people (see Psalm 146:5).

4. What does sincere reception of the gospel produce (v. 6)?

Paul encouraged the Colossians by assuring them that the gospel they had received was transforming lives all over the world. The outward reach of the gospel was probably far greater than what is recorded in Acts. These believers needed to know that it was not just another local religion like the mystery cults that thrived in their region. The gospel is infused with divine power that brings new life wherever it goes. Overall, the grace of God, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son for our sins, should cause us to share the gospel and thereby grow the church.

5. How was Epaphras related to the Colossians and to Paul (vs. 7,8)?

The gospel does its supernatural work, but it is spread by God's human instruments. That instrument in the case of the Colossians was a man named Epaphras, who is mentioned here. Epaphras is originally from Colossae (Colossians 4:12). At some point, he is jailed with Paul (Philemon 23). Paul views this man in two ways. First, Epaphras is a beloved fellow servant. This is a remarkable designation, for with it, Paul puts Epaphras on the same level as himself. He is more than Paul's assistant. They are serving together equally in some ways. The fact that they end up in prison together signifies that the Romans themselves realize this.

The second way Paul views this man is as a faithful minister to the Colossians. Epaphras has been one of

the designated leaders of the Colossian church. He is now in Rome with Paul, although we are not told why. Epaphras has brought the heartening news of the love and faith of the Colossians to the imprisoned apostle. It is “the Epaphras connection” that can cause Paul to have a strong attachment to a church that he may never have visited.

PRAYER AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE SAINTS (Colossians 1:9-14)

6. How are knowledge, wisdom, and understanding related (v. 9)?

Paul recognized that spiritual growth depends on spiritual comprehension. So, he prayed that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his will." Knowledge of God's will is not given to satisfy curiosity. Paul prayed that it might be known "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9). "Wisdom" denotes both fullness of knowledge and the skill to use it. "Understanding" refers to critical discernment—the ability to tell the difference between right and wrong, truth and error, important and unimportant. The Colossians faced an error that claimed superior knowledge; they needed these tools to combat it.

7. What elements of godly character did Paul request for the Colossians (vs. 10,11)?

Comprehension, though essential, must be disclosed in character. Thus, Paul prayed that his readers "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." One who knows God's will is obligated to practice it. To walk worthy of the Lord is to conduct oneself in a manner becoming to one who bears His name. Others should be impressed not by what we know, but by whom we know. "Unto all pleasing" is our final goal—to please God in every respect.

Those who cultivate an obedient attitude bear fruit in all kinds of works, just as a tree properly cared for naturally bears fruit. The strength to do so, of course, does not come from ourselves; it comes from the Spirit within. The infusion of divine power brings the fruit of patience, long-suffering, and joy. To have patience, or steadfastness, means to persist in the face of unbearable circumstances. The virtue of long-suffering refers to our reaction to persons. It involves holding our anger or irritability in check. The experience of joyfulness is the most amazing of all.

Only by the power of God can we be steadfast and long-suffering with joy!

8. At what point do we become qualified for our future inheritance (vs. 12- 14)?

Paul's final request was that the Colossians be thankful. He pointed out three things for which they should give thanks. First, they should thank God that He had qualified them to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (v. 12). Second, thanks should be given that God has rescued us from the power of darkness. Third, God deserves thanks because He "hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). "Translated" means "transferred" or "transported." Christians have been taken from Satan's kingdom of darkness and transported to the kingdom of Christ. Christ is here called "his dear Son," or "the Son of His love." The greatest bond of love exists between the Father and the Son.

In addition, the Father's love for mankind was expressed through His Son. He is the one "in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (v. 14). This is the heart of the Christian good news. Redemption speaks of setting free by the payment of a ransom... We are ransomed away from the slavery that once held us. Through this redemption, purchased by His blood, we now enjoy the forgiveness of our sins which releases us from bondage. The powers of darkness no longer control us, the redeemed.

CONCLUSION - Pulling Together

One of the things that endeared the Colossian church to Paul was that they were “pulling together.” They were united by their faith in Christ and their love for one another. Many churches are sadly lacking in this area. The members have different agendas and different goals. Some members may pull on the oar that preserves tradition and resists change. Other members may be pulling hard on an oar for radical change and dropping of tradition. The “boat” of a church like this will go in circles! May we learn from the Colossians the power of unity in purpose and faith for any church.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Grace and peace should be our prayer for all God's faithful people (Col. 1:1,2).
2. Believers' faith and love should be clearly evidenced to those around them (vs. 3- 5).
3. The gospel properly preached and received will bear fruit to the glory of God (vs. 6- 8).
4. Praying for the spiritual growth of others should be a high priority (v. 9).
5. Biblical truth is meant to be understood, accepted, and applied (vs. 10,11).
6. Redemption for any person comes only through the gracious work of Christ (vs. 12- 14).

PRAYER - Loving God, may we seek to honor Christ in our church by our faith and our faithfulness, by our love for You and our love for each other. We pray in the name of the one whose blood has rescued us from the power of sin and darkness, Jesus. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER - Pull together for the most impact.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON - In our lesson next week, we learn how to “*distinguish truth from deceit*” and how to stay away from evil seductions that can easily draw even devout Christians from the simple, but unchangeable truth that we have in Jesus Christ. Study Colossians 2:1-10.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY Willie Ferrell
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, June 25, 2023

Lesson 4 - "Distinguish Truth from Deceit" (Continued)

Lesson Text: **Colossians 2:1–10**

Background Scripture: **Colossians 2:1–19**

Devotional Reading: **Ephesians 3:14–21**

Colossians 2:1-10

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; 2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

LESSON AIMS

Facts: to show that we must be able to distinguish truth from deceit.

Principle: to affirm that we need to be rooted and grounded in Christ and to grow in Him.

Application: to show that if we are not rooted in God's Word and in Jesus our Lord, we can easily be fooled by false teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Cults have threatened the church since its beginning, and they have taken many approaches. Some have portrayed an image of strict moral standards. Others

have promised all the sensual pleasures one could desire. Some cults claim a knowledge of future events-what will happen to this world and how they will build a utopia or golden age. Others promise a better society here and now. Some follow the teachings of men or women long dead. Others follow a living charismatic individual who claims to be God or a divine spokesperson. Whatever their differences, all cults have one thing in common, and this is what gives them their following. If cultists can convince people they lack something, they have a good chance of converting them to their cause.

In Paul's day, cults were rampant in Asia Minor, where the Colossians lived. The error they faced was a mixture of ideas that offered deeper wisdom, a strict moral code, and contact with the spirit world. In this lesson we will see how Paul sought to combat it.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: A.D. 60

Place: from Rome

Laodicea is a few miles from Colosse and is a growing city in this period in terms of both numbers and prosperity. Paul probably has not visited either city, for he says many ... have not seen my face in the flesh. His connection with Laodicea and Colosse comes from his extended stay in Ephesus, approximately A.D. 54–57 (Acts 19).

Paul understands that the churches of the two cities are in close contact and fellowship. Thus, the Colossians are instructed to pass this letter along to the Laodiceans (see Colossians 4:13–16). In this letter, Paul addresses the heresy and doctrinal issues that have risen in the church.

The exact nature of the heresy is not as clear in the church at Colosse, but it seems to be connected with a false view of the nature of Christ. The city of Colosse was in a region with a rich heritage of Greek philosophy. This seems to have infiltrated the church in subtle ways and influenced the doctrine. Paul called the church back to a pure faith in Christ, a faith not mixed with paganism or philosophy.

In the Roman provinces, cities like Colosse might also have traditional gods and temples unique to their region. Each of these deities had its own priesthood and beliefs, and sometimes they were conflicting. Yet there was no pressure to make exclusive choices in religion. Perhaps the most sophisticated and mysterious of these ancient faiths was Gnosticism. This system emphasized the importance of esoteric knowledge.

There were several things that made Gnosticism incompatible with Christianity. Gnostics believed in many gods at many levels. Even if they eventually came to a supreme deity, this understanding of the spiritual world was at odds with the Jewish and Christian belief in a singular God.

Gnostics also made a radical division between the material world (which they believed was corrupt and evil) and the spiritual world (which they believed was the realm of truth and light). This made it inconceivable to Gnostics that the Son of God could assume a human body. The fundamentals of Gnosticism required that Jesus either be a god or a man, but not both.

Gnosticism became more organized in the second century A.D. In Paul's day, the elements of Gnosticism were just coming together, but their presence can be seen in his letter to the Colossians. Paul realized that faith in Christ and the way of Christianity was exclusive, meaning that it could not be combined with other faiths without losing its essence. There was no room for compromise.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STEADFASTNESS (Colossians 2:1-5)

Laodicea is a few miles from Colossae and is a growing city in this period in terms of both numbers and prosperity. Paul probably has not visited either

city, for he says many ... have not seen my face in the flesh. His connection with Laodicea and Colossae comes from his extended stay in Ephesus, approximately AD 54–57 (Acts 19).

Paul understands that the churches of the two cities are in close contact and fellowship. Thus, the Colossians are instructed to pass this letter along to the Laodiceans (see Colossians 4:13–16).

1. How was the fervor of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles demonstrated? How was this expressed in his anxiety for the churches of Colosse and Laodicea? (Colossians 2:1)

In combating error in Colosse, Paul did not hesitate to refute it directly. More often, however, he showed his readers that they had something far better than what the cultists offered. He did this, first, by painting a magnificent picture of Jesus Christ, showing that He is supreme and sufficient in His Person and works (1:15-23). He followed this with a personal testimony of his dedication to Christ's gospel and people (vs. 24-29).

The fervor with which Paul carried out his ministry to the Gentiles drove him to unflagging toil. He had a goal of not only evangelizing them but also bringing every one of them to maturity in Christ. This extended even to Gentile believers he had never met.

Paul expressed this concern "for you, and for them at Laodicea..." (Colossians 2:1). These churches, had been nourished by the ministry of Epaphras (1:7,8). But now they had to withstand error in order to achieve the maturity Paul desired for them, and this brought him great anxiety. He expressed this in the word "conflict," the Greek word from which we get "agony." It was often used of the striving of the athletic contest and was an apt term to describe Paul's fervent prayers for these believers. Such pressure was a daily part of his life (cf. 2 Cor. 11:28,29).

2. What was Paul's desire for the Christians he was writing to? (v. 2)

Gnosticism is built on a claim to have secret knowledge that is shared only with the elite adherents. Paul counters any such nonsense by claiming that he is glad to reveal the deepest secrets

of the mystery of God. So, yes, Christianity also has its mysteries, but these are revealed mysteries, open secrets (Ephesians 3:4–6; Colossians 1:26; 4:3).

Paul wants each and every believer to have full understanding of Christian doctrine. These beliefs are the riches of the church, for they are the truths that give us assurance of salvation through Christ. Here in verse 2, there are two things Paul desired for these Christians. First, he asked "that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love" (Col. 2:2). Comfort will come as believers are united in love, which is "the bond of perfectness" (3:14). To combat false teaching, which thrives on disunity, believers must be joined in love and purpose. The spiritual body cannot build itself apart from this (cf. Eph. 4:14-16).

Second, Paul desired that his readers abound in spiritual insight. He wanted them to have all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding or inclusive knowledge. It is the discernment of right from wrong, true from false. This insight will bring solid confidence, even in the face of false teaching. A church unified by love and equipped by discernment can withstand any cult. Paul assured the believers that in Christ they could enjoy full knowledge; they needed nothing the false teachers offered.

3. What did Paul mean by "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (v. 3)?

Paul's claim is that the truths of Christianity are universal and exhaustive. In the Christian system, we have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, not a mere taste. All truth is God's truth. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). Christians need never fear competing truth claims or attacks that question the truth of the Christian faith. Humans will never be able to destroy truth, no matter how fierce the attack (see 2 Corinthians 13:8).

This is not to say that other religions have no truth whatsoever. There are some parallel truths (mixed with error) that may be found in Islam, in Buddhism, even in Scientology. This is particularly true of religions that have been influenced heavily by Christianity. For example, the Book of Mormon

quotes extensively from the King James Version of the Bible. But the power of the consistent truth of the gospel will eventually break down every false teaching that challenges it (see 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5). Pure doctrine, the goal for which Paul works, is truth with no mixture of error (see 1 John 4:6).

4. How did the false teachers hide their logical fallacies? (v. 4)

Paul explained why he was so concerned about the Colossians and Laodiceans and why he was arguing so strenuously that all wisdom and knowledge reside in Christ. It was because there were some who would deceive them with enticing arguments. The word translated "beguile" is literally "influence by slyness." They were trying to lead them away from the truth by faulty reasoning.

The false teachers hid their faulty assumptions and logical fallacies behind persuasive arguments. They were glib talkers who sounded intelligent with their impenetrable philosophical vocabulary. In other Greek literature this expression is used of lawyers' persuasive speech by which they sway an audience toward an unjust verdict.

Paul refused to resort to these word games in his ministry, even with those who were familiar with them. He told the Corinthians that his speech and preaching were "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). He knew that true faith must stand on the Spirit's power, not human wisdom (v. 5). This is not to minimize learning but to insist that it take its proper place under Scripture's scrutiny.

5. What caused Paul to rejoice concerning the Colossians, even while they faced error? (v. 5)

Paul's initial reports indicated that the Colossians had resisted the false teachers. This causes him great joy and hearty approval for their stand. Paul gave assurance that although he was absent from the Colossians physically, he was with them in spirit. He here assumed a more encouraging tone. In spite of slick heretics in their midst, he rejoiced that they were still standing firm. In his mind's eye, Paul saw their "order, and the steadfastness of [their] faith in Christ." This was based on the report brought by

Epaphras (1:7,8). Their mutual love had drawn them into a compact unit similar to a military phalanx. They could therefore present a unified front before the false teachers, who could find no way to plant seeds of disunity and dissatisfaction among them.

To be continued...

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY Renee Little

Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, July 2, 2023

Lesson 5 - "Distinguish Truth from Deceit" (Continued)

Lesson Text: **Colossians 2:1–10**

Background Scripture: **Colossians 2:1–19**

Devotional Reading: **Ephesians 3:14–21**

Colossians 2:1-10

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; 2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

THE WAY TO STEADFASTNESS (Colossians 2:6-10)

6. How were the Colossians to build on the gospel they had received? (vs. 6,7)

As these believers had received Christ, so they were to continue to walk in Him—that is, to own Him as Lord over their spiritual development. Receiving Him involved a single act, one that took place at their conversion. But walking in Him entails continual

action. He who had saved them was also the key to daily victory over sin.

Paul took up the specific aspects of steadfastness that Christ provides. He began with an organic metaphor... "rooted" (Col. 2:7). This pictures a tree putting its roots deep into the earth. "Having been rooted" catches the tense of this verb—past action with results lasting to the present. The second verb, "built up" (Col. 2:7), draws on an architectural figure. It pictures the construction of a building. Its present tense portrays continuous action. Believers, having been rooted in Christ, now continue to grow in Him. The third verb, "stablished," is also in the present tense, showing the continuing result of being rooted and built up in Christ. Believers become more stable in the faith in which they have been instructed. They are also "abounding therein with thanksgiving," that is, overflowing with gratitude for all the provisions of Christ. Under these circumstances, there is no opportunity for false teaching to take root

7. What are some ways you can improve your Christian walk?

We must always keep in mind that we are walking toward a destination. The walk of the Christian life means we are continually moving, not standing still. Thus, we cannot afford the luxury of complacency. The potential exists for any one of us to stumble and go astray, so we must pay attention to where we are going and help one another stay on the path. Viewing the Christian life as a walk is a perspective of humility, as it recognizes that none of us still living has completely "arrived" yet.

8. How might false teachers take Christians as plunder? (v. 8)

While nurturing their faith, Paul's readers also had to be alert. "Beware," he wrote, "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." The present tense of "beware" speaks of constant vigilance. In fact, "any man" may point to some smooth-tongued person in their own congregation who was attempting to lead them astray. "Spoil" is a rare Greek word, used only here in the New Testament. It means to "kidnap" or "take as plunder." Paul was warning them not to let anyone carry them away as plunder or as captives by means of philosophy and empty deception. They were not to let false teachers hold them up as a trophy and say, "Look what I have." How tragic it would be for those who had been liberated from the kingdom of darkness (1:13) to be bound again!

9. What is philosophy?

Against what kind of philosophy did Paul warn? Paul now moves to four specific items of potential heresy. First is philosophy, the only place this Greek term is used in the Bible (although Acts 17:18 has philosophers in reference to people). We still use this word today and may use it in a neutral sense. For us, philosophy is either good or bad depending on what it teaches. For Paul's context, though, philosophy has a negative sense of human wisdom that is concocted apart from God. This is combined with vain deceit, meaning empty lies that are intended to mislead. Such fabulous whoppers may not even be believed by those who teach them, but they serve the teachers' purposes in devious ways (Romans 16:18; Ephesians 5:6).

Philosophy followed "the tradition of men" and "the rudiments of the world" (Col. 2:8). Tradition is merely what has been handed down from one to another. It sometimes has great value in stabilizing society, but in this case, it was human thought posing as the divine answer to human needs. Christians needed to be discerning lest they be seduced by its claims.

The latter phrase can refer either to elementary principles of the world's learning or to the angelic hosts of evil linked to the physical elements of the natural world (cf. Gal. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:20). In either case, they have no spiritual value because they are not derived from Christ. Why pursue bankrupt

philosophical tradition when all treasures are in Him?

10. How does our completeness in Christ refute false teaching? (vs. 9,10)

Paul exhorts the readers to be satisfied, for we are complete in Christ, lacking for nothing. Because of this, we should beware of philosophy and false teaching – they are unnecessary, for God's fullness dwells in Christ alone. The term "fulness" is significant because the heretical teachers used it to describe the totality of angelic beings occupying heavenly realms and allegedly sharing the divine essence. Paul, however, declared that all this "fulness of the Godhead" dwells in Christ alone. Deity is not distributed among many angelic beings; it resides as a totality in Christ, having a permanent home in Him.

The fact that the fullness of deity dwells in Christ has practical implications for Christians, for we have been made complete in Him. Those who trust Him partake of His divine fullness (cf. John 1:16). The verb tense implies that we stand in a condition of completeness in Christ. This does not mean we become deity, but we are partakers of God's nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

This is a truth that is impossible for us to fully comprehend. Why God should take vile sinners, transform them, and make them partakers of all that His Son is baffles our imagination. Only His grace can express His motive, and only His power can explain the miracle. Paul especially emphasized that He in whom we stand complete is the Head over all rule and authority. This speaks of all powers in the universe, including angelic ones—even those that serve Satan (cf. Rom. 8:38,39; Eph. 6:12). Christ has primacy over them because He created them (Col. 1:16) and because through His death He triumphed over them (2:15).

Cultists told the Colossians they ought to worship angels (Col. 2:18) because they shared in the divine fullness and mediated between God and men. But Paul declared that Christ is Head over all of them. Since believers are in Christ, they do not need to appease angels. We, like the Colossians, can say to all cultists, "You have nothing to offer that can

enhance my spirituality. I have all I need in Jesus Christ!"

****Extra notes taken from Megan Allen**

Ministries

[\(https://meganallenministries.com/summary-of-colossians-2/\)](https://meganallenministries.com/summary-of-colossians-2/)

Listed below are the different doctrines Paul mentions in this passage that we need to have a thorough understanding of:

- **Christ's Deity** – Throughout scripture, we see the deity or oneness of Christ with the Father. Paul spent much of chapter 1 laying that foundation. (Philippians 2:5-11; John 1:1, 14; John 8:58; Exodus 3:14-15; John 8:24; John 10:30-31; Hebrews 1:3-4; Colossians 1:15-17; John 17:4-5; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21-22; Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 43:10-11; Micah 5:2, Luke 2:4-7; Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 1:7-8, 17-18)
- **Our completeness in Christ** – this word "made complete" is in the present, passive tense which means that it's a completed action with ongoing results. (Ephesians 1:3-14; Ephesians 2:1-5)
- **Circumcision** – Circumcision in the Old Testament was the physical removal of flesh. It was a sign that a person belonged to the Lord. However, circumcision is of no value if the person's heart is far from God. God has always been after the hearts of His people. (Romans 2:28-29, Philippians 3:2-3)
- **Baptism** – The submersion into the water is a sign of death to our old life, then the rising out of the water is a sign of our new life in Christ. This is the physical act of baptism. It is a step of obedience to the Lord and a sign of our new life in Christ. However, true spiritual baptism occurs when we place our faith in Christ and receive the seal of the Holy Spirit, becoming one with Him. (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16; Matthew 3:7-11)
- **The resurrection of Christ** – The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith. If Christ was not raised, our faith is in vain. (John 11:25-26; Mark 16:6; Ephesians 2:4-9; Romans 6:1-8, 1 Corinthians 15:1-20)

- **Christ's Authority** – Christ is seated at the right hand of God, above all rule and authority. We are also seated with Him in heavenly places. (Hebrews 2:14-15, Ephesians 2:4-7)

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We have a duty to encourage and equip other believers with God's truth (Colossians 2:1,2).
2. Beware! False teachers do exist and can deceive even true believers (vs. 3,4).
3. Properly complimenting the spiritual progress of others will encourage them to continue growing in Christ (v. 5).
4. Obedience, faithfulness, and thankfulness are sure signs of a growing Christian (vs. 6,7).
5. The philosophies of the world may be attractive, but they lead to deadly deception (v. 8).
6. All true knowledge and wisdom comes from Christ (vs. 9,10).

CONCLUSION - Walking and Faith

Many people walk for exercise and enjoyment. Whether it's because the body can't tolerate more rigorous forms of exercise or just for the sheer enjoyment of the outdoors – many like to walk. Life, in many ways, is like purposeful walking. We should know where we are going. If lost, we should ask for directions. Life should be lived deliberately, not as if floating aimlessly down a river. Just as we should know why we are walking; we should know why we are living.

The most important part, however, is to know what road we are on. The Bible promises that if we choose to walk on the road that leads to life, we have the companionship of Jesus. In fact, it is a road pioneered by Jesus, for He is the trailblazer (Hebrews 12:2). This is what Paul means when he tells the Colossians to "walk ... in him" (Colossians 2:6). How is your spiritual journey progressing these days?

PRAYER

God of truth, may we never waver in our commitment to the essentials of the gospel: that Christ died for our sins and through Him we are freed from this bondage. May we resist enticing words from false teachers and walk in Christ all of our days. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER - Walk determinedly with Christ.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON - Next week's lesson is "A Chosen Community" and emphasizes that Christians should demonstrate the characteristics of Jesus. Study Colossians 3:1-25.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, July 9, 2023

Lesson 6 – “A Chosen Community”

Lesson Text: **Colossians 3:12–17**

Background Scripture: **Colossians 3**

Devotional Reading: **Isaiah 41:4–10**

Colossians 3:12–17

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. List some of the attitudes and behaviors that Paul says should and should not characterize the church.
2. Explain how a mind that is set on Christ rises above the pettiness of the world.
3. Volunteer for a ministry in his or her church that is focused on expressing a Christlike attitude toward people in the community who do not fit the demographic makeup of the congregation as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

As noted in last week’s lesson, Paul probably never visited the church in Colossae, but he knew quite a bit about it. His letter to them shows that he had a high view of these people. He commended them in several areas. But he did not hesitate to remind them

that they needed to leave behind the “old man” of lying and other malicious behavior, for they had put on the “new man” of peace and thankfulness for their fellowship with God and with one another. He urged them to build a community where the ideal church should be an island of respect and honesty in the worldly ocean of deceit and pretense. We may not have the ideal church, but we should not be satisfied with a church that shows no marked difference from the corruptions of the world.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In Colossians 2, Paul deals with doctrinal dangers to the Colossians, specifically their understanding of the nature of Christ. This may be combating an early form of Gnosticism (last week’s lesson). Paul moves to the ethical demands of Christianity in Colossians 3.

The ancient world had many competing ethical systems. The Romans could be violent and corrupt with little regard for ethical standards. They built their empire on slave labor. Julius Caesar was murdered on the Senate steps by the same senators who had elected him Dictator for Life. This confusing ethical stew was the environment of the Colossians as they sought to live Christian lives as a tiny group within their city.

Putting on Christian Virtues (Colossians 3:12-14)

1. Why did Paul call on Christians to practice Christian virtues? (Colossians 3:12a)

Christian virtues are the evidence that people are indeed Christians. Jesus reminds us that the world will know that we are his followers if we love one another (cf. John 13:35). Not only do we need to love one another, but we also need to love people of the world. Christian virtues stem from love. Without love, these virtues are impossible. Because God has

been so merciful and gracious towards us, we should be inspired to love others.

Christians should get rid of the excess baggage of their past sinful lives, as Paul has pointed out (vs. 5-11), but they should not be known merely for the things they do not do. They should show evidence of a transformed nature through godly deeds. “Therefore” (v. 12) points to the twofold reason for living a transformed life. First, it is consistent with the new nature God gave us in Christ. We have already “put on the new man” (v. 10); so it is only logical that we put on the virtues that this new nature produces. If we are God’s children, we can be expected to exhibit the same qualities He has.

2. What did Paul mean by “bowels of mercies (v. 12b)?”

Bowels represent the innermost part of a person, which were believed to be the basis of emotions. As the first virtue is “bowels of mercies,” we need to have a heart of compassion for other people. No matter what people may do to us, we are commanded to have compassion for them. After all, God has compassion for us when we sin against Him.

Kindness is a second quality produced by the new nature. This speaks of pleasantness of disposition and goodness of heart. It leads us to seek the good of another. Next comes humility. This is a realistic view of oneself in the light of God’s assessment. Although the Greeks considered this a vice, it was modeled by Jesus Himself (Phil. 2:5-8). It preserves us from arrogance.

3. How are meekness, and long-suffering related to one another (v. 12c)?

We are also to exhibit meekness, the social side to humility. This involves courteous treatment of others and a readiness to yield—a contrast to rudeness. Akin to this is long-suffering, or patience. It is the opposite of being short-tempered or irritable when provoked. One with this virtue refuses to take revenge when wronged.

Worldly responses to being wronged involve self-gratification. In other words, the emphasis is on the individual. In contrast, spiritual responses to being wronged involve self-denial. The Christian let’s God

fight his or her battles. This leads to peace on behalf of the Christian.

4. How do forbearing and forgiving one another go hand in hand (v. 13)?

The attitude of patience is actualized in this virtue: “forbearing one another.” This is the willingness to be patient with others who may do stupid or inconsiderate things. Since this includes all of us from time to time, forbearance is a crucial attitude to foster within any church.

Forbearance is promoted by the seventh virtue: forgiveness. Paul reminds the readers that they have a supreme model of forgiveness in Christ, who in His worst moment of agony and injustice said, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34). Likewise, Christ has forgiven each of us and paid the penalty for our sins with His own blood. When church members can humble themselves in both seeking and granting forgiveness freely, the church will be blessed. Perhaps we will quarrel, but we must forgive.

5. What is the most important virtue (v. 14)?

The last virtue is Paul’s most important. That virtue is “charity”, meaning love. This involves more than giving to homeless people or performing other charitable acts. It is an overwhelming mind-set to care for the church and all of its members with selflessness and devotion. This is how the “bond of perfectness” is achieved. Without the presence of this ultimate attitude, there will be no peace in a church. The Colossians may already be aware of Paul’s teaching that Christ “loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). As Christ taught forgiveness on the cross, He demonstrated love through the cross. The harmonious church is where the members serve one another “by love” (Galatians 5:13).

Maintaining a Proper Relationship with God (Colossians 3:15-17)

6. How should God’s peace act as an umpire among Christians? (v. 15a)

When the church consists of members who embrace and practice the Christlike virtues Paul has listed, it is a congregation of peace. Peace reigns, beginning with the hearts of the believers. For Paul, this ideal is what the church should be, indeed what it is called to

be. Here in verse 15, Paul commanded, “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.” God’s peace should be a standing feature of our lives. “Rule” means “to act as an umpire or judge.” The peace of God should be the basis for judging rightness or wrongness in a conflict.

How does this inner peace act as an umpire in conflict? The primary application here is to relationships among members of the church, for as Paul wrote, we have been called to this peace “in one body” (Col. 3:15). The Holy Spirit has brought us together in unity, but it is our responsibility to preserve the unity through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Though unified in faith and purpose, Christians do not always agree; so, they need the “umpire” of God’s peace to guide them.

7. Why is it necessary for us to keep on cultivating thankfulness? (v. 15b)

Paul’s second imperative regarding our relationship with God is “Be ye thankful.” The idea is to keep on becoming thankful. We should start by being thankful for all the people God has placed in our lives. In fact, we should be “giving thanks always for all things” (Eph. 5:20). So, we must cultivate this attitude with strength from the Holy Spirit (v. 18).

Paul pointed out elsewhere that a lack of thankfulness is one of the first steps downward toward apostasy and moral degradation (Rom. 1:21). It is also an early step toward disunity in the church and the restlessness that opens the door to false teaching. Conversely, thankfulness is an expression of humility and trust as we recognize the goodness and wisdom of God’s design even though we cannot always understand it (cf. 1 Thess. 5:18).

8. What will characterize Christians who let Christ’s word dwell in them richly? (v. 16)

Another characteristic of the peaceful church is the presence of the Word in the church’s teaching and worship. Christ’s word should dwell richly within us. This means we should give it more than a superficial acknowledgment. We should desire all the wealth it has to offer and make it the inner fountain that continually refreshes and nourishes us. If we do this, the outcome for the church will be rich as well.

The earliest church in Jerusalem was focused on its obligation to “teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). Now, three decades later, Paul reaffirms that learning the ways of the Lord is a lifelong duty, and the teachings of Christ are an inexhaustible source of material. This ministry of the Word includes both the words of Jesus and the teachings of the Old Testament that are the foundations of His teachings. Today we have the added benefit of the writings of the apostles and their associates—our New Testament; this is a resource largely unavailable to the Colossian church at the time.

A peaceful church is more likely to be a worshipping church. It will find togetherness in singing praise in unity. It is important that such singing is not by rote or mere habit. Rather, it is to be a true expression of the melody of praise that the believer naturally has in his or her heart.

9. What principle should guide us in what we say and do? (v. 17)

Paul’s final imperative in this section is a wise reminder: it is not about us. It is about God. Church activities and fellowship must always have this perfect perspective, that we are doing everything for the glory of the “name of the Lord Jesus” (compare 1 Corinthians 10:31). We can measure how well we are doing this by asking whether what we say and do is in harmony with an attitude of “giving thanks to God.” Do we give thanks when we bad-mouth other believers? No. Do we give thanks when we refuse to forgive? No. Do we give thanks when we fight and fuss? No. We must give thanks to God with our whole hearts, leaving no room for bitterness or pettiness (Psalm 9:1). This is the essence of praise.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The elect of God should, spiritually speaking, dress like God (Col. 3:12).
2. Our forgiveness of others should model Christ’s forgiveness of us (v. 13).
3. The greatest Christian virtue of all is love because it enwraps every other virtue (v. 14).
4. A spirit of thankfulness and a heart of peace often go hand in hand (v. 15).
5. The Word of God must be our guard and guide in any and all situations (v. 16).
6. Thankful hearts will desire to bring God the greatest possible glory in all they do (v. 17).

CONCLUSION

In the society of the street gangs that plague our cities, the most volatile offense is to “disrespect” someone. On occasion gangs can live in peace with rival gangs if no disrespect is shown. Even in this culture of lawlessness, respect may lead to a type of warped peace.

Why, then, is the church sometimes a hotbed of disrespect? Why can some churches never seem to achieve the peace and harmony that Paul sees in (or at least desires for) the Colossian church? Can’t we, the chosen people of God, learn to respect one another? Can’t we practice humility and forgiveness? Can’t we muster up a powerful love that will bind us together? We can. We should. We must.

A fighting, divided church will not survive. Are there things you can do to bring more harmony to your congregation? Have you been one of the agitators, or are you one of the peacemakers?

PRAYER

Lord, fill our hearts with Your love. Give us patience with our brothers and sisters, and help us forgive one another. May Your peace rule in our hearts. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER - Live out your calling

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week’s lesson examines the significance of Christian commitment. Study 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, “Visible for God.”

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY Montario Fletcher
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, July 16, 2023 Lesson 7 – "Visible to God"

Lesson Text: **1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

Background Scripture: **1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

Devotional Reading: **Titus 2:11–15**

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, Unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor 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.

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. 9 For they themselves show 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.

LESSON AIMS

Facts: to show how Paul celebrated the gospel's effect on believers in Thessalonica: their work of faith, labor of love, and patience in hope (1 Thessalonians 1:3)

Principle: to realize that conversion to Christ affects all aspects of life.

Application: to urge Christians to live lives of power and joy in spite of negative circumstances.

INTRODUCTION - What You See Is What You Get

Do you remember using a personal computer in the 1980s? If you do, you probably remember being amazed at all the things it could do. Personal computers made it easy to do what was tedious on a typewriter. They fit the text to the length of the line, started a new page at just the right point, and even helped check the spelling.

But with their dark monitors with green or amber dots forming the letters, those early computers did not show exactly how a document would look when it was printed. It was a later generation of computers that offered WYSIWYG (pronounced WIH-see-wig), or "what you see is what you get," a feature that today's computer users take for granted.

Today's text is about what-you-see-is-what-you-get faith. It describes a group of young in-the-faith Christians whose lives were changed by the gospel. There was no questioning whether their inward and outward lives were in tune with each other. Since they had come to believe in Jesus Christ, they were visibly, obviously becoming a new kind of people.

If we are content with the idea that faith in Jesus is an inward, private matter that does not affect our public life, this text will challenge us!

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: A.D. 51

Place: from Corinth

Thessalonica was a prosperous port and center of trade in the region of Macedonia, the northern part of the Greek peninsula. Like most cities of its kind, it was filled with all kinds of people and all kinds of beliefs. Economically there was a wide gap between the rich merchants and poor laborers. Socially there was powerful pressure to conform to established standards. Religiously there were many followers of pagan cults, some encouraging grossly immoral practices, but also a notable number of faithful Jewish worshippers of the God of Israel.

When Paul first visited the city, on what we call his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1–10), his preaching there led many to believe in Jesus. But it also provoked persecution, and Paul was forced to leave after only a short time. The new believers were left alone to face the pressures of their environment. Would they persist in their new faith, or would they go back to their old lives? When he was able, Paul sent his assistant Timothy to visit the Thessalonian Christians and report back (1 Thessalonians 3:1–5).

Timothy's visit confirmed that the new believers were faithful and growing. Though not without problems, the church was demonstrating its faith through action (vs. 6–8). Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians probably just a few months after leaving the city and soon after receiving Timothy's report. He begins with a thankful celebration of the Thessalonians' transforming faith. Far from succumbing to the pressures of their culture, they had become examples to believers in their region and beyond. Through the centuries, their example continues to speak to us today.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE THESSALONIANS (1 Thessalonians 1:1-3)

1. What were Silas' and Timothy's personal backgrounds? (1 Thessalonians 1:1)

In the world of ancient Greece and Rome, it is customary to begin a letter with a salutation that names the writer and the addressees and that offers a brief greeting. Paul uses this format, but he deliberately alters it to express the profound relationship he has with his fellow Christians. After naming himself and his assistants, Silvanus (or Silas as he is called in Acts) and Timothy.

Silvanus accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:40). Timothy was Paul's "son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2), for Paul had led this young man to faith in Christ. Timothy joined Paul and Silas at Lystra (Acts 16:1-3) on the second missionary journey.

2. How did Paul greet the Thessalonian believers? (vs. 1,2)

Paul greeted the Thessalonian believers by wishing them grace and peace. While "grace" was a common salutation, it has a special meaning for believers. God's grace is the source of our salvation (Eph. 2:8) as well as all the blessings God bestows upon us (Rom. 5:2). The peace spoken of by Paul is spiritual well-being, and it flows from God's grace to us.

Following the greeting in a Greek letter was a word of thanksgiving. But Paul's thanksgiving was no mere formality. He goes to great lengths to describe exactly why he thanks God constantly for the Thessalonian Christians. These believers were a constant source of joy to Paul and his two missionary associates because of their visible commitment to the Lord. They are of the utmost importance to him as fellow members of God's family. Again, that reality is reflected in his constant prayer on their behalf.

3. What three virtues did the Thessalonians exhibit? (v. 3)

Paul constantly remembered three things that characterized these Thessalonian Christians. Their commitment to God was visible. These three things were connected with Christian character qualities. These were "faith," "love," and "hope."

First, their work was motivated by their faith. Work is the essential fruit of faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:10). James pointed out the absolute necessity of works accompanying faith (James 2:14-26). Faith without works invalidates any profession of faith.

Second, their labor was produced by their love. Labor refers to toilsome or wearisome work. They labored even in the midst of persecution. Their love was in response to the love God bestowed on them (Romans 5:5). We can love God as we should only because He has loved us first (1 John 4:19).

Third, they were patient due to their hope in Christ. The word "patience" speaks of endurance. They served Christ while bearing up under difficult circumstances (2 Thessalonians 1:4). Endurance ruled out discouragement, for they had the hope of a better day ahead no matter how bleak their situation might be. Christian hope anticipates the future certainty of Christ's return for the church (1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18).

Faith, love, and hope are virtues that should indelibly mark every Christian's life (1 Cor. 13:13). These virtues give rise to behavior that is notably praiseworthy.

SALVATION OF THE THESSALONIANS (1 Thess. 1:4-6)

4. How did Paul know that the Thessalonians had been chosen by God? (vs. 4,5)

It was evident to Paul and his associates that the Thessalonian believers were chosen by God. Paul addressed them as "brethren," meaning they were fellow Christians. They were beloved of God. God's love is the source of our election to salvation and holiness of life (Eph. 1:4).

Paul knew the Thessalonians had been chosen by God because he saw the dramatic change that had taken place in their lives. Paul explained that when he traveled around delivering the gospel, it was not just done with words (1 Cor. 2:4). His message was empowered by God (Acts 4:33; Rom. 1:16). This may have included the occurrence of miracles along with the preaching (Rom. 15:19; Gal. 3:5). The miracles authenticated Paul as an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12) and sometimes drew crowds to hear his preaching (Acts 14:8-18).

The Holy Spirit was also involved in driving the message home to their hearts and convincing them of their sin and of the righteousness that Christ provides (John 16:8-11; Acts 1:8). References to power and the Holy Spirit are linked together in the Scriptures (Rom. 1:4). The Thessalonians received the gospel message from Paul with the full assurance that it was the truth.

Paul was fully certain in his own mind and heart of the truthfulness of the gospel that he preached. He was unwavering in his proclamation of the truth (1 Cor. 2:2). His message was clear and unapologetic. It was a message that would change lives radically.

Paul and his missionary associates did not just proclaim a convincing message; their lives demonstrated a consistency with that message. The Thessalonians had observed their earnestness, dedication, and willingness to suffer for Christ (Acts 17:5-10). They practiced what they preached.

5. Whom did the Thessalonians imitate after their conversion to Christ? (v. 6)

Paul noted that the Thessalonians became imitators of the missionaries and of the Lord. The word "followers" means "imitators." It is normal for new converts to imitate those who led them to Christ.

The Thessalonian church made Christ the ultimate example to be imitated (Eph. 5:1). The notion of imitating the Lord would include, among other things, living lives of holiness (1 Pet. 1:15,16), extending mercy to others (Luke 6:36), and being willing to suffer for righteousness' sake (1 Pet. 2:20-21).

The Thessalonian believers suffered as a result of having received the gospel (1 Thess. 2:14). In spite of outward trials, they possessed inward joy. The indwelling Holy Spirit was the source of this joy (Gal. 5:22).

Christian joy is determined not by our external circumstances but by our personal relationship with the Lord. Paul and Silas illustrated this in their jail experience at Philippi (Acts 16:23-25). They rejoiced in the Lord in spite of their cruel beatings, chains, and imprisonment. How pleased Paul was to see the Thessalonians follow his example!

To be continued...

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY: Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, July 23, 2023 Lesson 8 – “Visible to God”

Lesson Text: **1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

Background Scripture: **1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

Devotional Reading: **Titus 2:11–15**

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, Unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor 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. 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. 9 For they themselves show 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.

TESTIMONY OF THE THESSALONIANS (1 Thess. 1:7-10)

6. How did the Thessalonians become model Christians? (vs. 7,8)

The Thessalonian believers became examples for other believers. The word "ensamples" means

"model" or "pattern." They were models for all the believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia, which composed all of Greece. Paul called attention to the Thessalonians as publishers of the good news. This was further proof that they were chosen by God.

After receiving the gospel, they made it known to others. They sounded it out, letting it ring out unimpeded. God's Word was "sounded out" (v. 8) like a trumpet echoing throughout all of Greece. It rang out everywhere in their own province of Macedonia and then on to neighboring Achaia. The two regions together represent a span of hundreds of miles, a great distance for the new believers' reputation to have spread. Paul went on to say that the story of the Thessalonian believers is so widely known that he hears about it before he can tell it.

7. What was entailed in the conversion of the Thessalonians? (v. 9)

At the heart of the reports Paul heard was the account of the conversion of the Thessalonians to God from the worship of idols (Acts 14:15; 26:18-20). Paul's mention of idol worship suggests that the church predominantly consisted of Gentiles who had been pagans. The pagan people of this period worship idols not out of love, gratitude, or awe, but to placate the whims of the gods so that their own lives will go well. Pagan worship is like ritualized bribery, offering the gods a payoff in return for favors. Paul says that the Thessalonians serve the living and true God. God is often called "the living God" in contrast with idols, which have no life at all (compare Daniel 6:26).

This was a change in their worship practice, a practice they had probably been steeped in from their earliest years. It was a momentous inward change

first of all (Titus 3:5). Then it was outwardly manifested as they entered an entirely new life of fellowship with God.

8. *The Thessalonian Christians faced persecution when they turned from idols to the living and true God. What problems do we face today when we turn away from the idols of our culture?*

As new believers reorient their priorities, their entire lives begin to transform. Everything—leisure time activities, spending habits, topics of conversation, even the way a person reacts to stress—changes. Often this change is startling to friends and relatives, and some relationships are broken in the process. This may be complicated further if the church does not quickly supply new relationships to support those who have lost the support of former friends.

Some people find that becoming a believer cost them financially, as their previous job may have involved dishonest activities or required immoral behavior. At a spiritual level, a new believer may quickly face strong temptations or spiritual oppression as the devil tries to discourage him or her. Yet in all these trials, we have the power of the living and true God on our side.

*Additional Resource: **Putting God first: 5 modern-day idols we're in danger of letting take over our lives**
<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/5-modern-day-idols-that-are-taking-over-our-lives/84609.htm>

- **Work.** Many people look to work for a sense of significance and security. While there is nothing wrong with work, it can be dangerous when it drives our decision-making to the point of completely ignoring God's ways and desires, or we put it before things that are equally or more deserving of our time.
- **Success.** God wants us to be successful, but He does not desire success to take His place in our hearts. When we pursue success outside of God's will, we will find no satisfaction, but when we choose to surrender to God and His ways, Joshua 1:8 promises

that we "...will be prosperous and successful."

- **Phones.** Or tablets or whatever shiny piece of kit you carry around with you and can't stop checking every five minutes. If you're giving your electronic device more time and attention than your loved ones, something's wrong.
- **Money.** There is much value in money, but it is not the most valuable thing. That's why Jesus teaches in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."
- **Image.** In the age of Facebook and Instagram, we can be obsessed with projecting the image of the perfect life, perfect relationship, perfect kids, perfect holidays, perfect friendship group...Just choose your filter and in one click, your life can look like everybody else's dream come true. But the Christian faith is about the joy found in God, more than in ourselves or the things of this world.

9. *While the Thessalonian Christians were serving God, for whom were they waiting? (v. 10)*

The Thessalonian Christians had turned to God not only to serve Him but also to wait for the return of His Son from heaven. The concept of waiting conveys the idea of waiting with confidence and patience. The new believers now have a different expectation of the future, a "hope" that impels them to be steadfast. Their hope is in the very Son of the one true, living God. He has died and risen again on their behalf and promised to return to gather them to himself.

The rest of the world, still in rebellion against God, will be subject to His wrath, His holy judgment against those who have rebelled against Him. But the believers expectantly await their Lord's arrival to deliver them from wrath and bless them as His people. The bleak hopelessness of paganism has been replaced.

Throughout 1 Thessalonians, Paul expressed his hope in the return of Christ (2:19; 4:16). The apostle believed that Christ's return could occur during his lifetime, for he spoke in 4:17 of "we which are alive" when He returns. By way of application, this means that we too should be looking for Christ's return from heaven for us at any moment.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The best thanks we can give for others is to pray for them consistently (1 Thess. 1-1,2).
2. Faith, hope, and love are characterized not just by attitudes but by actions that should mark every Christian life (vs. 3,4).
3. If we are simply faithful messengers of God, His powerful Word will do the rest (v. 5).
4. We will never be worthy examples to others if we lack joy in our lives (vs. 6,7).
5. Humble faith speaks more loudly than any words (v. 8).
6. Serving Christ and looking for His coming go hand in hand (vs. 9,10).

CONCLUSION - Change for a Lifetime

Paul describes Christian faith as more than mere ritual. It embraces every aspect of life, bringing purpose, direction, and confidence. It transforms ordinary people into world changers. It gives meaning to the most mundane of daily affairs. It provides assurance that the future contains boundless blessings.

Knowing Jesus Christ makes us the people God intended us to be, living as God intended us to live. The change is public, visible, and unmistakable. And it continues for a lifetime.

PRAYER

Almighty God, we confess that sometimes we are content to keep You in a corner of our lives. Today we offer ourselves to You to be remade. We invite You into every part of us, so that we can be clearly Yours in every way. In Jesus' name, Amen!

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." (Matthew 5:14)

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

It is possible to be very busy in God's service, but have the wrong motivation. For the next lesson, think about motives an individual might have that center on personal enhancement, rather than God's glory. Next week's lesson is "Pleasing to God", will show what Paul thought about this subject. Study 1 Thessalonians 2:1-20.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY: Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, July 30, 2023

Lesson 9 – “Pleasing to God”

Lesson Text: **1 Thessalonians 2:1-13**

Background Scripture: **1 Thessalonians 2**

Devotional Reading: **Galatians 1:1-10**

1 Thessalonians 2:1–13

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 cloak 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. 9 For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring 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. 13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Lesson Aims

After this lesson each student will be able to:

1. Identify ways that Paul’s behavior among the Thessalonians demonstrated his commitment to pleasing God.
2. Explain why pure motives are important to behavior that pleases God.
3. Identify a personal motive or behavior that needs to be changed for him or her to be more pleasing to God.

Introduction

Paul found it necessary to answer his opponents who were engaged in discrediting the ministry at Thessalonica. Paul and his companions, Silas and Timothy, were accused of preaching a questionable message with the ulterior motive of exploiting people. The identity of their opponents is uncertain, but they evidently had raised some doubts in the minds of the Thessalonian believers. Paul wrote about their visit to Thessalonica, recalling the hardships and challenges of the ministry.

These missionaries exemplified what it means to be pleasing to God. They ministered from pure motives and did not seek the plaudits and honor of men. Their energies were expended in the ministry and in working to meet their own material needs. They were driven by a compassionate love for the Thessalonians, serving as their spiritual parents. All the while, the behavior of Paul and his coworkers was beyond reproach. The Thessalonian believers were witnesses of these things, as was God Himself.

Results of the Ministry (1 Thessalonians 2:1,2)

1. How did the missionaries respond to opposition? (1 Thessalonians 2:1,2)

Paul recounts his experiences in Thessalonica, reminding his readers that the message that had been brought was filled with the truth of the gospel and accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit (1:5). Before coming to their city, he had preached in nearby Philippi. There, Paul and Silas were treated with contempt for preaching the gospel (Acts 16:22-24). They were beaten, stripped of their clothes, and thrown into jail with their feet placed in irons. However, they were not deterred from their calling and mission. Once released from prison, they journeyed south to Thessalonica (16:40—17:1). Paul's faithfulness in persecution is an expression of his commitment to please the God who sent His Son to die. To please God is to follow the Christ of the cross.

2. What does being persecuted say about the genuineness of one's faith or message?

Persecution in and of itself does not prove anything. Groups of people have been persecuted throughout history for a variety of reasons, some completely unconnected to the truth or falsehood of their beliefs. When people persevere in their beliefs despite persecution, it does tell us they are deeply committed to those beliefs and may cause people to look more closely at their faith. In Paul's case, the combination of his character, hard work, and perseverance in spite of opposition painted a picture that strongly contrasted with the false teachers of his day. If we persevere in spite of opposition, it may give us an opportunity to testify of Christ.

Conduct of the Ministry (1 Thessalonians 2:3-8)

3. What three characteristics were entirely absent from the missionaries' appeal? (v. 3)

The missionaries' appeal did not derive from any kind of misguided belief or error. Their message was the truth. So, Paul reminds the Thessalonian Christians that they had done nothing out of deceit (that is, the attempt to mislead people), out of uncleanness (which implies impure sexual motives),

or out of guile (the deliberate use of deceptive methods). Paul is so confident of their honesty that he states it flatly, with little explanation or embellishment.

4. Why was Paul entrusted with the gospel? (v. 4)

Paul now comes to the heart of the matter. From his life-changing encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. Paul asserted that God had allowed them to preach the gospel (1 Thess. 2:4). The word "allowed" refers to the fact that they were determined genuine and endorsed by God (1 Cor. 11:28; Tim. 3:10). He had examined and approved these missionaries. As a result, they were entrusted with the message of the gospel. Can God entrust you with the gospel?

Paul was well aware of the stewardship of preaching the gospel that had been given into his care (Gal. 2:7; Tim. 1:11). This stewardship was a grave responsibility for him (1 Cor. 9:16,17). The sole motive of this missionary team was to please God, for they were accountable to Him. They made no attempt to please men in order to gain their favor (cf. Gal. 1:10). Pleasing God is a mark of Christian commitment.

God is the ultimate Judge who sees the inner motives of our hearts (Ps. 139:1-3; Heb. 4:12,13). He "trieth our hearts" (1 Thess. 2:4), meaning He examines our inner thoughts and motives to show whether they are genuine. Paul rested his case with God, fully confident that He knew what men could not know.

5. What did Paul and his companions refrain from doing, even though they had a right to do so? (vs. 5,6)

The missionaries never used flattering words to gain influence with people for selfish purposes. The Thessalonians knew this to be true. Paul flatly denied ever using a "cloak of covetousness." Paul and his coworkers did not disguise covetousness by pretending that they were not covetous. They were not greedy for what others had, whether money or whatever else they possessed (Luke 12:15; Eph. 5:3). God knew this to be true of them.

Further, they did not seek public praise from the Thessalonians or from any other individuals. They could have made demands for financial support as apostles of Christ (1 Thess. 2:9), but they refrained from insisting on personally benefiting from such an arrangement, fitting as it was (cf. Gal.6:6).

6. To what did Paul compare the gentle care given to the Thessalonians? (v. 7)

Unlike the proud, selfish, demanding behavior of the typical traveling teacher, Paul's life with the Thessalonians has been characterized by gentleness. This is not mere passivity, sitting back so that others can have first place, but positive concern and care for the new believers. The term nurse refers not to a medical caregiver but to a nursing mother. That term provides a keen image of love that forms a deep bond and gives of oneself for the good of the other. As Paul had worked through the day and stayed up nights to support himself and nurture the Thessalonians in their faith, he had been very much like a nursing mother with her children.

7. Why were the missionaries willing to give their very lives for the sake of the Thessalonians? (v. 8)? How did they support themselves (v. 9)?

Love shaped by the gospel is never just a matter of feeling. It always translates into action. The missionaries had such a yearning love for the Thessalonians that they were willing to give not only the gospel but also their very lives for them (1 Thess. 2:8). "Affectionately desirous" is a single word in Greek, and it refers to a close attachment to someone. Paul and his companions were willing to give their "own souls," that is their very lives, for their converts. The Thessalonian Christians are beloved to them, as dear and precious as the closest family member.

Paul now cites an obvious demonstration of his love for the Thessalonians: he supported himself by working as a tentmaker rather than accepting money for preaching to them (v. 9). Paul will later explain in 1 Corinthians 9:1–18 his practice of self-support. There he asserts that he has the right to expect to be paid for his preaching, no less because he is an apostle of Christ. However, he willingly surrenders that right so that his support will not be a burden for those to whom he preaches or an impediment to their listening to the gospel. It is a practice that imitates Christ's own loving self-sacrifice.

To be continued...

Lesson Summarized By: Montario Fletcher
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, August 6, 2023

Lesson 10 - "Pleasing to God" (Continued)

Lesson Text: **1 Thessalonians 2:1-13**

Background Scripture: **1 Thessalonians 2**

Devotional Reading: **Galatians 1:1-10**

1 Thessalonians 2:1-13

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 cloak 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. 9 For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring 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. 13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Testimony of the Ministry (1 Thess. 2:10-12)

8. How did Paul summarize the missionaries' behavior among the Thessalonians? (v. 10)

The minister's behavior was not just an expression of their lives before God. It also provided the example that shaped the lives of the Thessalonians. It is often said that the gospel is better "caught" than taught. Paul demonstrates that truth in this section. Paul describes their example as holy, demonstrating proper reverence for almighty God. It was just, reflecting adherence to God's standards of right and wrong. And it was blameless, consistent in a way that left them above criticism.

Again, Paul appeals to the witness of God, his final witness of their character and integrity. But he also reminds the readers that they are his witnesses as well. The missionaries deliberately lived such lives before them so that they could both hear and see what the gospel is all about.

9. What did the fatherly care of the new believers include? (v. 11)

Having previously compared themselves with a nursing mother (v. 7), Paul now compares them with a father counseling his children. He says we exhorted them, a term that stresses urging on toward a goal, in this case a righteous life. They had comforted them, implying fatherly consolation in difficult times.

With the word charged, Paul expresses that his teaching had been urgent and insistent. Stressing that they had acted this way toward every one of you, Paul reminds the Thessalonian Christians of their individual attention and concern for them. Just as a

good father treats his children as unique individuals, so the ministers deal with new Christians as unique individuals.

10. What does it mean to walk worthily of the Lord (1 Thess. 2:12)?

Just as Paul's life has been forever changed by the good news, so now have the Thessalonian Christians' lives been changed in the same way. Paul's teaching and witness are aimed at transforming their walk, that is, the way that they live in the world moment by moment.

The standard of their new life is to be worthy of God. In a very obvious sense, this is impossible, of course. No sinful human can ever be worthy of the holy God. But Paul here and elsewhere calls on Christians to live or walk in a manner worthy of God and the gospel (Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10). His point is to urge Christians to conform their lives to the character of God as revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When we know God as the God who entered the world as a human being to die for unworthy, rebellious sinners, we are compelled to submit to His authority and become conformed to His image. We want to grow in Christlikeness in response to the wonderful gift we have received. That is Paul's point, as he reminds his readers that they have been called into God's kingdom and glory.

The kingdom of God in the New Testament is God's reign or rule. Jesus taught His followers that God's kingdom was already breaking into the world because He was present (Matthew 12:28), but would not be fully realized until His return (Matthew 25:34). In the meantime, followers of Jesus experience already the blessings of God's kingdom even while they suffer the hardships and indignities of this present, evil age. Paul reminds the readers of this key teaching in this verse. The God to whom they belong has made them subjects of His glorious kingdom, in which they already experience the peace, unity, and contentment of living under God's rule.

Paul went on to say (in 1 Thess. 2:13) that they have accepted his teaching as not just his, but God's. That

word is not an abstract message but something that is now actively at work in them, empowering and changing their lives as they put their confidence in the gospel message.

“Walking Worthy”

Resource: Got Questions
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/walk-worthy.html>)

As noted previously, the apostle Paul uses the phrase *walk worthy* in Ephesians 4:1 and Colossians 1:10, in both the KJV and NKJV. The NIV's wording is “live a life worthy.” The ESV reads “walk in a manner worthy.” The word *worthy* has the idea of “matching up” -- our actions should match our words, and our outward presentation should match our inward convictions. To “walk worthy” of our calling means to live up to that calling, to live in such a way as to honor God as we complete His course of action for us. In Colossians 1, walking worthy is tied to four personal characteristics:

- being fruitful in every good work;
- steadily increasing in the knowledge of God;
- using the power of God to joyfully endure and patiently persevere; and
- giving thanks to the Father for what He has done.

The command to walk worthy of our calling does not mean that we are to somehow merit or earn our position. Rather, Paul is exhorting believers to live their lives so as to prove they belong to Christ. They are to maintain loyalty to Christ and live with integrity. True believers will display the fruit of the Spirit who lives in them (John 14:17; Galatians 5:22–23).

Practical Points

1. We must be bold in speaking the gospel, for it always brings opposition (1 Thess. 2:1,2).
2. We must be sure our motive in ministry is always to please God (vs. 3,4).
3. We must be careful that our message is not perceived as benefiting us (vs. 5,6).
4. Unbelievers are not enemies to be converted, but souls to be loved (vs. 7,8).
5. How we behave is far more important than how eloquently we speak (vs. 9,10).

6. We cannot expect others to walk worthy of God, if we do not do so (vs. 11,12).

Thought to Remember - “Walk Worthy”

“Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Ephesians 4:1,2).

Conclusion

In recent years Christianity has been plagued with scandals. The media have repeatedly drawn attention to prominent Christians whose lives have not matched their words. Beyond those notable cases, many of us have been personally disappointed by Christians who have professed one thing and lived another. Worst of all, sometimes the Christians who disappoint us are ourselves.

This passage reminds us that such failure is not inevitable. It is not even normal. When the gospel takes hold in a life, as it did in Paul’s life, the person is forever changed. Our focus is taken off of ourselves and placed on the God who saved us with His amazing grace. We center our lives on reflecting His sacrifice in Christ in the way that we live with humility and love for others. Lives like that show us that the gospel is more than a good sales pitch. It is “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16), a salvation that we can see in transformed lives.

Prayer

Gracious Father, we want our lives to be fitting reflections of Your love. We submit ourselves to Your transforming power, that by Your grace we can please You with our lives. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

Anticipating Next Week's Lesson

Circumstances prevented Paul from visiting the Thessalonian believers, but he sent Timothy to see how they were doing. He was delighted when

Timothy returned with a good report, and he hoped to get back to them soon. This shows that a rich reward of Christian service is spiritual advancement by those who come to Christ.

Study 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13, “Sustained Through Encouragement.”

Lesson Summarized By: Montario Fletcher
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, August 13, 2023

Lesson 11 - "Sustained Through Encouragement"

Lesson Text: **1 Thessalonians 3:1-13**

Background Scripture: **1 Thessalonians 3:1-13**

Devotional Reading: **Acts 4:32-37**

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; 2 And sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. 5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain. 6 But now when Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: 7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: 8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? 11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. 12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: 13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

LESSON AIMS

Facts: to see how Paul used Timothy to comfort and strengthen the Thessalonians until he could visit them again.

Principle: to realize that faith and love can deal with any opposition experienced by believers.

Application: tell how sharing in other believers' experiences gives encouragement in difficult circumstances.

INTRODUCTION - Cast Away or It's a Wonderful Life

The movie *Cast Away* was a big hit many years ago. It vividly depicted the struggles of a man left alone on a deserted island after an airplane crash. He struggled to survive, to find food, water, and shelter. But more than that, he struggled against his loneliness. Desperate for a friend, he began to speak to a volleyball as if it were a human being. This movie rings true for audiences because it reflects a truth about how God made us. Human beings were made for relationships.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: A.D. 51

Place: from Corinth

Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians after a forced absence. Persecution broke out against the gospel in Thessalonica, and Paul was forced to leave the city (Acts 17:1-10). As his absence stretched on, it was clear that the church faced difficulties and uncertainties. Wanting to know about their situation, Paul sent Timothy, his assistant in ministry, to visit the church and report back. In 1 Thessalonians 3, Paul expresses to the Thessalonians his concern for them, his desire to be reunited with them, and his motivation for sending Timothy to Thessalonica to encourage these young believers to stand fast in their commitment to Christ.

MISSION FOR ENCOURAGEMENT (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5)

1. Why was Timothy dispatched to Thessalonica? (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3)

Paul was deeply stressed at being away from his Christian friends in Thessalonica, who were experiencing severe persecution (1 Thess. 2:14,15). When he and his companions could no longer stand the strain of separation, the decision was made to give up the assistance of Timothy and send him to visit the Thessalonians and report back. But Timothy's departure also meant that Paul would be without assistance in his missionary work or day-to-day affairs. The burden of Timothy's departure was considerable, but for Paul, the opportunity to reconnect with the Christians of Thessalonica made it imperative that he bear that burden.

Timothy now returned to Thessalonica to strengthen the believers there. Timothy was also sent to comfort these believers. The idea is that of coming alongside to actively encourage someone (cf. Eph. 6:22). The Thessalonians were recent converts to Christ and needed instruction and encouragement in their faith. The Thessalonian Christians are continuing to experience the pressure and opposition that had arisen while Paul was present. Such difficulties might induce them to give up their faith and return to their old lives. But with the encouragement that comes from strong fellowship, they can stand firm and not be moved. Timothy would help strengthen their new fellowship.

2. Why should believers not be surprised by persecution? (v. 4)

Paul wants his coworkers to remember that persecution and suffering should not surprise them. He reminds them of a point that has been a common part of his teaching, something that he had taught them in his brief time among them: that suffering is an expected part of the lives of God's people who live in a world of evil. God has intended all along that His people will experience trials in the world, testing and proving their faith as they resist the evil that surrounds them (John 16:33; Acts 14:22). When believers suffer, it does not mean that God has lost control. Just as Christ suffered, so those who follow Him suffer as well.

3. What was the gist of Paul's concern for the Thessalonians? (v. 5)

This verse repeats a part of what Paul said in verse 1, that he sent Timothy when he could wait no longer to learn about the Thessalonian Christians' welfare. Paul's primary concern was for the faith of these new Christians. The threat to their faith was no less than the devil himself.

The repetitive-sounding phrase the tempter ... tempted puts strong emphasis on the possibility that a Satanic attack might have shaken the young believers' trust in Christ. The outcome of such an attack, if successful, would mean that Paul's labor had been in vain, that is, empty and meaningless. Paul's missionary work is entirely focused on bringing people to faith in Jesus and the salvation that their faith receives. His work will be for nothing if they do not persist.

REPORT OF ENCOURAGEMENT (1 Thessalonians 3:6-10)

4. What three things did Timothy relate to Paul about the Thessalonians? (v. 6)

Timothy came from the Thessalonians to Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5), bringing good news. To everyone's joy, what he had to report was just the opposite of what Paul feared might have been the situation in Thessalonica. Timothy related three things to Paul. First, the Thessalonians' faith in Christ was stable and bearing fruit in love even in the midst of trials. Second, the Thessalonians retained very favorable memories of the missionaries and their ministry among them. These recollections were evidence of their love for the Lord and His servants. Third, the Thessalonians deeply desired to see the apostles, just as the apostles desired to see them. There was a mutual longing to see each other in a face-to-face reunion.

5. How did Timothy's report affect Paul and his companions? (vs. 7-9)

The testimony of the Thessalonians, though young in the faith, provided the missionaries with comfort. Timothy had been sent to comfort and to encourage them. Now the older in the faith were encouraged greatly by the younger. The persevering faith of the Thessalonians brought great solace to Paul and his companions. This faith produced love in them, which in turn prompted them to work and to endure in hope (1 Thess. 1:3).

The missionaries experienced a resurgence of energy after hearing that the Thessalonians continued to stand firm in the Lord. They were spiritually renewed (v. 8 of our lesson). The Thessalonians were standing fast in their faith, unmoved by persecution from their adversaries (cf. 1 Cor. 16:13; 1 Thess. 2:15). The key to withstanding the trials and difficulties of life is persistence of faith in the Lord. The heartfelt thanks Paul gave God was as nothing in comparison to the joy he had received (v. 9). Paul recognized that God's hand was at work in their lives (cf. Phil. 2:13).

6. Why did Paul want to visit the Thessalonians? (v. 10)

Even though Paul spent time in prayer night and day for the Thessalonians, he still had a desire to return to Thessalonica. Paul prayed with intensity that he might see the Thessalonians again (3:10). Paul still wanted to see the Thessalonians face-to-face so that he could instruct and encourage them in the Lord. He wanted to supply what was needed for their spiritual growth.

While they were standing strong in faith, there were things lacking due to their level of spiritual maturity. They had room to grow, much as a child develops into adulthood. Paul prayed that he could be present to foster additional growth in them. For Paul, staying connected to other Christians and serving their needs in the gospel so that they can be made stronger in their faith is the only right response to the wonderful gift God has given in Jesus Christ.

GOAL OF ENCOURAGEMENT (1 Thess. 3:11-13)

7. How did Paul affirm the oneness of the Father and Jesus Christ? (v. 11)

Paul fervently desired a return to Thessalonica, a desire expressed as an appeal to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We have an affirmation here of the lordship of Jesus Christ and His oneness with the Father. First, the Father and Jesus Christ are addressed equally in the prayer. Second, they are the combined subject of the verb "direct," which is singular. The Father and Jesus Christ together would direct, or make straight, Paul's path to Thessalonica.

The prayer that God would make straight the way to Thessalonica was essentially an appeal to remove

any possible barriers. Unless God took the necessary measures, Paul would not be able to make the journey (cf. 1 Thess. 2:18). He did visit Macedonia, the region in which Thessalonica was located, a few years later on his third missionary journey

8. Why did the Thessalonians need to abound in love? (v. 12)

Paul knows the Thessalonians have been living out the gospel's mandate of love (1 Thessalonians 1:3). But he knows their love needs to be sustained and to increase. If the gospel is about God's love, then people who believe it should be known as those who abound in that love—not just for each other, but also love for the unlovely. So Paul prays that the readers will love all people.

9. When will believers have their lives and works reviewed by Christ? (v. 13)

Paul's prayer continues with the request for strong, faithful hearts, purely and thoroughly devoted to God. Closing with anticipation of Christ's return, Paul emphasizes a key theme of the passage. What motivates his deep desire for fellowship with the Thessalonian Christians is the profound truth that they will stand together with Christ when He returns. What motivates Paul to work for their faithfulness and growth is knowing that they will all stand before Christ with a desire to be pleasing to the one who gave His own life to save them.

The encouragement that believers receive from each other comes from this place. Our Christian brothers and sisters are the people with whom we will spend eternity. Together we are the greatest objects of God's love, the sinners for whom Christ died. Knowing that implants in us a deep desire to be together and a deep desire to serve Christ in a way that honors Him. So we take encouragement in our service, as we share our lives with other Christians.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Even the Lord's most godly servants need support and encouragement (1 Thessalonians 3:1,2).
2. Suffering for our faith is not a punishment but an opportunity (vs. 3,4).

3. Our faithfulness amid suffering helps others endure suffering as well (vs. 5-7).
4. The best encouragement we can give to fellow believers is to stand fast in the Lord (v. 8).
5. Desiring to fellowship with and help other Christians is a mark of mature faith (v. 9,10).
6. Our prayers for others should focus on their growth in love and holiness (vs. 11- 13).

from sin and unto righteousness. Study 1
Thessalonians 4:1-12.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries

CONCLUSION - The Family of Faith

Think about what have been some of the best experiences of your Christian life. Chances are good that they were experiences when you were actively working and sharing with other Christians. Paul and the Thessalonian Christians had the same experience. For them, separation was agony, but a report of steadfast faith was tremendous joy. In hard times, when we are discouraged or when we just feel empty, it is time for us to reconnect with the family of faith.

PRAYER - O God our Father, we thank You that You did not leave us alone. You gave us each other. Please help us love, support, and cherish each other so that we can receive the encouragement that You send us through each other. In Jesus' name, amen!

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER - "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main" (John Donne, 1624)

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is "Demonstrated in Action" and challenge believers to be sanctified by separation



Sunday, August 20, 2023

Lesson 12 - "Demonstrated in Action"

Lesson Text: **1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**

Background Scripture: **1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**

Devotional Reading: **Hebrews 11:1-6**

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. 2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; 5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: 6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. 7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. 8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit. 9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; 11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to study Paul's teaching on how to please God and deal fairly with one's fellow men.

Principle: to be aware that God expects believers to live lives of holiness (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:7).

Application: to challenge Christians to be sanctified by separation from sin and unto righteousness.

INTRODUCTION

Authentic Christian commitment by its nature is active. Christian commitment cannot survive in a state of slumber or hibernation. It can be actively demonstrated by us in today's world in several ways. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul described ways that we can achieve this. He began by encouraging us to actively obey God's instructions so that we may please Him. The driving motive of our lives should be to please the Lord.

Paul further reminded us that God's will is that we be separated to holiness and moral purity. We face the same challenges from culture that believers did in Paul's day. Thankfully, we have clear instructions from Paul on the issues of moral purity. These are as essential for us today as they were for Christians then. Paul engaged his culture with precepts of morality that were opposed to the values of the time.

Authentic Christian commitment is also demonstrated in love. There are practical ways in which our love may abound toward each other day by day. These also make our commitment to Christ attractive to unbelievers.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The readers of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians lived in an environment in which religion was seldom seen as altering a person's way of life. In Greek religions the worshiper seldom was expected to obey the god in any way. The Greek gods simply were not interested in that kind of thing.

While many pagan religions of the day simply called on worshipers to observe certain rituals, others offered something more. Some invited worshipers to engage in promiscuous sexual activity as part of the

cults' observance. Such practices were almost taken for granted by many citizens.

As Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, he responded to the challenges of this pleasure-seeking environment. The God whom he preached was much more than a pagan deity who accepted gifts and doled out favors. The Thessalonian Christians needed to be conscious of this difference, remembering that God had made them and saved them for a purpose. That purpose extended to every part of their lives.

PLEASING GOD (1 Thessalonians 4:1,2)

1. In what way does Paul continue to encourage the Thessalonian believers to please God (1 Thessalonians 4:1)?

The word "Furthermore" introduces a continuation of Paul's previous exhortation to increase and abound in love and his expression of his desire that the Thessalonians would be established unblameable in holiness (3:11-13). There was still progress to be made (v. 10). Paul had further instructions to give regarding their daily life and conduct. They needed to go on to the next stage of spiritual maturity.

Paul urged the Thessalonians by the authority of Jesus Christ to keep on doing what he had instructed them to do (4:1). Paul has already passed on this Christian traditional information to the Thessalonians by word of mouth in his preaching. Now, he gives it to them in writing. The topic is very clearly labeled, "how ye ought to walk," and means precisely, "how you must live and please God." These two verbs are in the present tense in Greek, implying that Christianity is a way of life which characterizes all our activities and not just a few of the things we do. Paul often uses walk as a way of talking about the whole of life, all of one's behavior moment to moment.

The Thessalonians have made an excellent start in this God-pleasing walk. But by its nature, this new kind of life always offers the prospect of growth. Paul referred to this next level of spiritual maturity as abounding "more and more." The Thessalonian Christians needed to overflow in their love and in the other dimensions of the Christian life, which Paul explained in the verses that follow.

2. The Christian life "always offers the prospect of growth." If you were put in charge of growth development at your church, what would you do to promote spiritual growth among the members?

Surely there are programs already in place that promote spiritual growth (i.e., Sunday School and Bible Study classes). These should be encouraged. But there are other ways to promote growth besides Bible study. Someone might suggest a kind of apprentice program to train people for various ministries in the church. A regular retreat for ministry leaders is another idea. Some have found that getting involved in short-term missions promotes spiritual growth.

MORAL PURITY (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

3. What is the meaning of the word "sanctification" (v. 3)?

Paul was addressing pagan cultural values that the Thessalonians once had espoused but that now had to be replaced with God's high moral values. Paul summarizes God's will for the Christian's life in a single word: sanctification. Sanctification is the state of being set apart from common usage for something distinctly sacred, belonging entirely to God. Paul stresses this point at the beginning of his discussion of sexual behavior to make a very clear point: the way a person behaves sexually is not a "private" matter but affects the person's relationship to God. In the ancient world as much as the modern world, people insisted that their sex lives were no one's business but their own. By contrast, Paul asserts that our sex lives are very much the business of God (v. 3).

Specifically, Paul says that sanctification means abstaining from fornication. In this context the term refers to all sexual activity outside the context of marriage. From the biblical perspective, God created human sexuality to be expressed in the context of faithful marriage between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:23,24). Sex was part of what God pronounced "very good" on the sixth day of creation (Genesis 1:28, 31), but it remains such only when it is exercised in the context for which God created it. Those who understand God's purpose in creation and want to honor God and His purpose, will understand

why the Bible forbids sexual activity outside marriage.

4. How can a husband live in a holy and honorable way with his wife (v. 4)?

A Christian whom God blesses with a spouse is under a holy obligation to live in a sexually wholesome manner with him or her. The word "vessel" in 1 Thessalonians 4:4 is taken by many to be a figurative reference to a man's wife (cf. 1 Pet. 3:7). Others understand it as speaking of the believer's own body. That would underscore the fact that Paul's admonition of self-control and marriage applies equally to husbands and wives (1 Cor. 7:2). Sexual purity demands that a husband live with his wife in a holy and honorable way. This elevates marriage to the level of holiness that God requires. It provides the wife with the honor and respect due her. There are no double standards, for God's directives on self-control and the sanctity of marriage apply to the unsaved as well as to the saved (1 Cor. 7:9-13; Heb. 13:4).

5. What does Scripture say is one thing that keeps unbelievers from knowing God (v. 5)?

The sanctified exercise of legitimate, God-given sexual drives is in stark contrast to the illicit sexual perversions characteristic of the unbelieving world

(Rom. 1:26; Eph. 4:17-20). Here Paul draws a sharp contrast with the understanding of sexuality that many of the Thessalonian Christians would have had before they came to faith. Lust of concupiscence is a dramatic phrase. Both the words lust and concupiscence refer to powerful desire and urges. So, the phrase taken together means something like "strong desire added to strong desire." Paul suggests that, apart from our relationship with God, we have nothing other than our desires to act on, and so we will be controlled by them. If we know God, we can submit our sexuality to His will.

This statement implies that the person who refuses to discipline his or her sexual behavior to the will of God is acting like someone who does not know God, a pagan. The desire for sex is perhaps the strongest urge that a human being experiences, but for those who know God, it is something that can be brought into submission to Him. As Christians, we are to act as salt and light in our culture (Matthew 5:13,14), prophetically calling people to repentance and holiness. Our primary goal must always be to bring people into a saving relationship with God that will progressively change their lives from the inside out. Just as Paul was doing here.

To be continued...

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY Willie Ferrell, Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, August 27, 2023

Lesson 13 - "Demonstrated in Action" (Continued)

Lesson Text: **1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**

Background Scripture: **1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**

Devotional Reading: **Hebrews 11:1-6**

1 Thessalonians 4:6-12

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. 7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. 8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit. 9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; 11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

MORAL PURITY (continued)

6. What did Paul mean by defrauding a brother (vs. 6,7)?

Paul insists that our sexual behavior is of vital importance for our relationship to God. But here he also asserts that it is important for our relationship with other people.

“That no, man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter” ... Several words need explanation here. First, “go beyond” means quite literally “to overstep” or “break laws.” In this context it obviously means to break this moral law, Secondly, if he does break this moral law, a man will, by, that very fact, defraud his brother. This word denotes “taking advantage of,” “robbing,” or “cheating some, one” through greed. A comment is also needed on the phrase “in any matter.” It is not just any matter that is in view, but

specifically this matter which has just been mentioned, that is unethical sexual activity. The sense of the passage is then that when a man does not live with his own wife as he should, but instead commits adultery with someone else’s, he must know that he has violated, or “robbed” his brother by so, and that he deserves the vengeance of God. Even though the brother, who has thus been outwitted and defrauded, may never discover the wrong that was done against him, there is, nevertheless, an Avenger-God.

An avenger is one who maintains the rights of others by dealing with exploiters. Those who engage in illicit sexual behavior can only expect God's judgment. Believers will give an accounting of their deeds at the future judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). Paul was stern about these matters. He solemnly predicted and affirmed the grave consequences of sexual immorality when he visited Thessalonica.

The second reason Paul gives why sexual immorality must be avoided is that it runs counter to God's call (v. 7 of our lesson). His call is purposeful. God has not called us to "uncleanness," meaning sexual impurity. Such uncleanness should never be found in a believer (Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5). God has called us to live holy lives. Holiness makes no allowance for immorality.

7. What does it mean to despise God's instructions (v. 8)?

Paul drew the logical consequence to his admonition on moral purity. The word "therefore" could be translated "for this very reason." The person who "despiseth" (disregards) God's instructions and warnings opposes God Himself. He can anticipate

nothing but divine judgment. God has provided believers with the help we need to obey His instructions. He has given us the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:6). His enablement includes the strength to exercise self-control while living in an immoral and pagan environment (5:16). Practicing moral purity demonstrates Christian commitment in today's world. Purity in our physical relationships is also in keeping with the spiritual relationship between Christ and His bride, the church, who is made "holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

BROTHERLY LOVE (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)

8. How are we taught to exhibit brotherly love (vs. 9,10)?

The love that the Christians have for each other is brotherly love. Prior to the New Testament, this term was used almost always for the love one naturally has for family members. But Paul applies the term broadly: all Christians should love each other as brothers and sisters because in Christ we have become members of the same family.

The basis for this wide, deep love is the wide, deep love of God. Paul said that he did not need to write to the Thessalonians about brotherly love, for they had been taught by God to love each other (v. 9). God teaches us by the indwelling Holy Spirit's outpouring of God's love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5). Love for other Christians is inbred through our relationship with the Spirit of God.

God's sending His Son to die for sinners, is the supreme demonstration of love. If we believe that message, we are compelled by it to change our outlook and bring as many into the circle of our love as God brought into His circle through Jesus.

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to overflow more and more in their love for other Christians (v. 10 of today's lesson). They had made contact with other churches in the province of Macedonia and entered into a mutual love relationship with them. Paul commended the churches of Macedonia for their love and their willingness to support other believers in desperate need (2 Cor. 8:1-5). Still, the potential existed for them to increase in their affection for each other.

9. Paul said the Thessalonian church's love for others was known throughout Macedonia. How can a church today become known for its love?

If we set out to be known for our love, we will probably fail. We need to make loving others a priority whether anyone notices or not. But if we achieve our goal, we'll probably get a reputation for it as well. Do we help our members when they are in need? Do we invest in people for their own sake and not just for what they can do for us? Are we quick to overlook a slight or insult, and quick to praise another for a job well done? These are the marks of love; let's do them "more and more."

10. What twofold result comes from exhibiting brotherly love (vs. 11,12)?

"And that ye study." This word does not refer to study in the sense of opening books or reading; it means "to desire," or "to determine." A possibly clearer translation would be, "aspire to live quietly and take care of your own affairs while you work with your hands as we instructed you."

There is dignity to work, for work is a blessing from God (cf. Gen. 2:15). A believer should be if at all possible self-supporting and independent and therefore not a burden to other believers. Paul set an example by working with his own hands (1 Thess. 2:9). There is no place for idleness when one could be working. A person actively engaged in his own daily occupation will not have time to be a busy-body.

The fulfillment of these goals produces a twofold result. First, there is a positive testimony before unbelievers. To do these things is to walk honestly, that is, to behave in a becoming or decent manner. It wins the respect of those on the outside, referring to the unsaved (Col. 4:5; 1 Tim. 3:7); for they observe that Christians are not taking advantage of each other.

Second, Christians who work with their hands will not be dependent upon others. This admonition was probably directed at those who were living irresponsibly on the charity of those who were more industrious. Paul reminds these people to renew their

commitment to work and so to take care of their own needs. Love compels Christians to be generous with each other, but it also compels that they never take advantage of such generosity when they have the means and opportunity to support themselves (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12).

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. It is never enough to know the truth; we must practice it and grow in it (1 Thessalonians 4:1,2).
2. Holiness is God's will for us, and He provides the power to grow in it (vs. 3-5).
3. Recalling God's character and calling will help us maintain purity of life (vs. 6,7).
4. To take biblical commands lightly is to despise the God who gave them (v. 8).
5. There is always opportunity for our love to increase in extent and intensity (vs. 9,10).
6. Diligence in our daily work and duties is a powerful witness to the world (vs. 11,12).

CONCLUSION - Our Divine Purpose

As Paul reminds the Thessalonians about Christian behavior, we see that no part of their lives has been excluded. Whether it is the very private matter of sexuality or the very public matter of community life and work, new life in Christ transforms it. Whether it is those closest to us or those farthest away, the love of Christ compels love for all. God has made His will and purpose clear in all these matters. Those who are captivated by God's grace and love will want to do nothing so much as to please Him by fulfilling His will and purpose in all areas of their lives. By pleasing God, fulfilling His purpose in every area, we discover the purpose for which we were made: to be His entirely.

PRAYER

Father in Heaven, we surrender our lives to You again. Forgive us for holding back parts of ourselves as if they belonged to us. Make every part of us Your sacred, holy territory. In Jesus' name, amen!

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

“It was character that got us out of bed, commitment that moved us into action, and discipline that enabled us to follow through.”—Zig Ziglar

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