

Unto The Hills Ministries

Traveling Through Thessalonians

Being A Faithful Servant in the Light of Jesus' Return

By

Pastor Thomas Donelan

Copyright © 2011 by Pastor Thomas Donelan, Unto the Hills Ministries, all rights reserved. Permission given to make copies for personal or class use as long as no changes made to the manuscript and no charges made. Free distribution only. All scripture unless otherwise noted is from the Authorized (King James) version of the Bible.

Introduction

In every chapter of First Thessalonians Paul makes mention of the soon anticipated return of Jesus. In the first chapter we saw what was expected of the Church. Today we see Paul's defense of his ministry while he was in Thessalonica. And in his defense we see how we are to be servants of the Living God in the light of the Lord's return.

As Paul said under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: 1 Thessalonians 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: and this is a good saying. It is OK to follow our leaders but only as far as they follow Jesus. And in this Chapter Paul shows us through his ministry some things we need to be doing, not just in actions but in attitudes.

Paul's Defense of His Apostleship, our Example in Service

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 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.

- The existence of the thriving church is evidence that his trip there was a success. Life produces growth, if the thing is not growing, it is sick or dead.
- Shamefully treated in Philippi. We remember the story of the Philippian jailer who had Paul and Silas beaten and whipped while they were in prison for casting a demon out of a poor, possessed woman. We remember their testimony while they were there (remember those who live godly in Christ will suffer persecution, not may or might suffer but will suffer). Did they gripe and complain? (The account is in Acts 16:12-34) Woe is me! I was serving the Lord and look at how I was rewarded! God forbid! They were singing praises to God while they were in stocks with stripes that they have received. We remember the results: The Philippian Jailer and his whole household was saved. We seem to think we are called to a life of comfort and ease. Just eat, drink, and be merry and you had better not say or do anything to offend me or else! It was their testimony: the praises, the worship, the fact they did not run away when the opportunity presented itself

that combined to convict the jailer of the truth of their message. What message are we preaching with our lives?

1 Thessalonians 2:3-4 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.

- They exhorted. They came to build up, encourage, and love not to tear down mock, and insult.
- An elderly widow, restricted in her activities, was eager to serve Christ. After praying about this, she realized that she could bring blessing to others by playing the piano. The next day she placed this small ad in the Oakland Tribune: “Pianist will play hymns by phone daily for those who are sick and despondent—the service is free.” The notice included the number to dial. When people called, she would ask, “What hymn would you like to hear?” Within a few months her playing had brought cheer to several hundred people.¹
- One man who was ousted from his profession for an indiscretion took work as a hod carrier simply to put bread on the table. He was suddenly plunged into a drastically different world. Instead of going to an office each day, he was hauling loads of concrete block up to the fifth level of a construction site. Gone was the piped-in music in the corridors; now he had to endure blaring transistors. Any girl who walked by was subject to rude remarks and whistles. Profanity shot through the air, especially from the foreman, whose primary tactics were whining and intimidation; “For ____ sake, ____ can’t you do anything right? I never worked with such a bunch of ____ ____ in all my life .” Near the end of the third week, the new employee felt he could take no more. “I’ll work till break time this morning,” he told himself, “and then that’s it. I’m going home.” He’d already been the butt of more than one joke when his lack of experience caused him to do something foolish. The stories were retold constantly thereafter. “I just can’t handle any more of this.” A while later, he decided to finish out the morning and then leave at

¹Dean Merrill, *Another Chance*, Zondervan, 1981, p. 138

lunchtime. Shortly before noon, the foreman came around with paychecks. As he handed the man his envelope, he made his first civil comment to him in three weeks. “Hey, there’s a woman working in the front office who knows you. Says she takes care of your kids sometimes.” “Whom?” He named the woman, who sometimes helped in the nursery of the church where the man and his family worshiped. The foreman then went on with his rounds. When the hod carrier opened his envelope, he found, along with his check, a handwritten note from the payroll clerk: “When one part of the body of Christ suffers, we all suffer with it. Just wanted you to know that I’m praying for you these days.” He stared at the note, astonished at God’s timing. He hadn’t even known the woman worked for this company. Here at his lowest hour, she had given him the courage to go on, to push another wheelbarrow of mortar up that ramp.²

- We never know when what we do will touch the lives of others. We need to watch that it is for the better not the worst with our words and action.
- **Not of deceit:** We preach not a lie, but the truth of God. **No uncleanness:** it did not spring from any impure affection for any sin, for popular applause, or worldly interest; nor did the ministers of it connive at uncleanness in others, or practise it themselves, as did the false teachers; but bore their testimony against it, both by word and example, and taught no doctrine that encouraged to it. **No guile:** We had no false pretences, and were influenced by no sinister motives. No trickery, just we brought you the truth of the Gospel.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-6 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: (6) Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

- No flattering words: to try to entice you or win your influence and support.
- No cloke of covetousness: they did not take the opportunity or advantage by the ministry of the word, to indulge a covetous disposition, or to amass

²IBID

wealth and riches to themselves. Ministers are to feed the flock not fleece the flock. They sought to be a blessing and not a burden.

- Watch the minister who says the workman is worthy of his hire. There is to be in my mind a two way street of thought:
 - The congregation to the pastor: the workman is worthy of his hire. Not a cheap disposition, not as I heard in several deacon meeting: “we keep the pastor poor, God keeps him humble.” (I was one of the deacons, not the one who agreed with this thought!)
 - The Pastor to the congregation: freely I have received, freely I give. I make no charge of the ministry. God takes care of my needs. My job is to feed the flock of God that was purchased with His blood.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-9 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: (8) So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. (9) For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

- Gentle among you: the gentle and sacrificial love that a nurse has to her own children, Paul had this affection to his “children in the Lord.” We should have this same affection especially to those who are of the household of faith, and those God has allowed us to lead to Christ.
- Not only not willing to be burdensome but a blessing to the point of laying down our lives for your sake.
- Not only did they preach the gospel but they took care of their own physical needs by laboring. Paul by trade was a tent-maker. There could be no charge against Paul for laziness nor of his taking advantage of others while proclaiming the Gospel.

1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 (10) Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holy 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.

- Holy - In the things of God. Justly - With regard to men. Unblamable - In respect of ourselves. Among you that believe - Who were the constant observers of our behavior.
- By exhorting, we are moved to do a thing willingly; by comforting, to do it joyfully; by charging, to do it carefully. Walking: how we live out our lives.

The Conversion of the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 2:13 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.

- In addition to the reasons for thankfulness already suggested, the apostle here refers to the fact that they received the truth, when it was preached, in such a way as to show that they fully believed it to be the word of God.
- Besides your accepting it with your hearts, it evidences itself in your lives. It shows its energy in its practical effects on you; for instance, working in you patient endurance in trial. Showing love in presenting the gospel despite of the circumstances.

1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 (14) For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: (15) Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: (16) Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

- He strengthens and encourages them in their afflictions which they suffered among their own people, because they were afflicted by their own countrymen. And this happened, he says, to the churches of the Jews, as well as to them: and therefore they ought to take it in good part.
- Just as the church in Jerusalem was persecuted by the Jewish non-believers, the people were persecuted by those in their own city. We should not be surprised when it happens to us: those who live godly in Christ Jesus will

suffer persecution.

Satan & The Coming of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 (17) But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. (18) Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

- Paul shares his great desire to see them again, though they are never far from his heart: his thoughts and prayers. While space and time may separate Christians physically but never spiritually. We can always pray for and be thankful for one another.
- Paul seems to emphasise here that he personally desires to see the brethren here, and some of the sweetest times I have know have been just spending time with Christians, fellowshiping with each other, encouraging each other in the Lord. It does not matter if they are old friends or Christians I have just met, there is a connection there, a relationship, we share a family connection.
- satan hindered us. he is our adversary, walking about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Sometimes satan works through people, sometimes through circumstances, sometimes through a thorn in the flesh as with Paul. We do not know the source of the hindrance, we know God allowed it, either in judgment or testing. What we need to do is “endure hardness as a good soldier” (2 Timothy 2:3) remembering as Jesus said “they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20). The church in America has become soft, expecting blessings because “we are the great American church” but we are going to be in for a rude awakening. We are not called to be “apostles of comfort” in the “The Church of All Ease.”

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 (19) For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? (20) For ye are our glory and joy.

There are five crowns that a believer can earn as a reward for running his race well and will be received by us at the judgment seat of Christ. Not the Great White

Throne Judgment at the end of time but the “bema judgment of the believer's works” where rewards are given. This is post rapture but pre second coming.

1 Cor. 9:24,25 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Rev. 4:10,11 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honour and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Just as the elders cast their crowns at Jesus' feet, we will cast our crowns,

This crown is the crown of rejoicing, or the “Soul Winner’s Crown.” It is awarded to those who faithfully witness for Jesus, spreading the gospel. Paul had no greater joy than in those who God gave him the privilege of leading to Christ. We cannot save anybody, the Holy Spirit does that but we can be the vessel He uses.

Faithful people will be the glory and joy of faithful ministers in that great and glorious day.

Closing Thoughts

We are to live a servant's life in the light of Jesus' return. If He is Adoni, then we are dokimos. If He is Lord and Masters, then we are bond servants, slaves. A bond-servant is a voluntary slave. He loves his master and will not leave him so it tempers his attitude in everything he does, he acts in love, desiring to please his master.

If we succeed in this we will get rewarded when Jesus comes but we don't seek rewards, just to please the Master.

